

Vol. 5 No. 5



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CURRENT NOTES

The Newsletter For ATARI Owners

Published By

ACE

The Washington Area
Atari
Computer
Enthusiasts

Special Features

Computer Software Piracy

Page Designer

Flight Simulator

SynFile+ Structure

Disk Label Generator

Disabling 800XL Basic

Regular Features

Action! Action

Atari Scuttlebits

Battle Bytes

Club News

GameViews

Going Online

S.S.C.

Tips' N' Traps



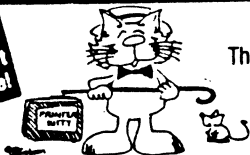


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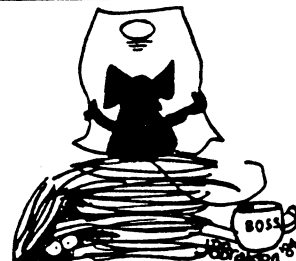
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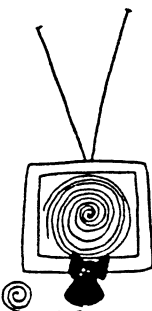
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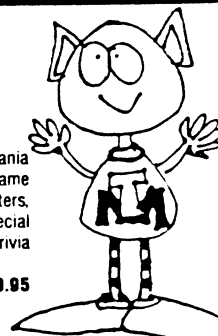
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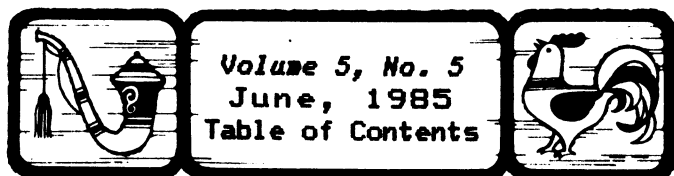


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Current Notes

Managing Editor: Joe Waters

Exchange Editor: Jack Holtzhauer

Circulation: John Lauer, Ed Seward

Columnists: M. Evan Brooks, Roland Gabeler, Jack Holtzhauer, Bob Kelly, Ed Seward, Jon Smith, Stevenson, Francese, & Burke.

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The Editor of Current Notes is Joe Waters, 122 N. Johnson Road, Sterling, Virginia 22170. Submissions of articles or advertising copy, subscription requests or back-issue orders should be sent to the editor. Deadline date for articles and advertisements is the **12th day** of the preceeding month.

Editor's Notes:

I didn't really think we would have another 40-page issue this month, but here we are once more filled to the brim with Atari news, reviews and tutorials. Our Secret Sunnyvale Correspondent again gives us an "inside" look at what's going on at Atari while our ever-diligent Bob Kelly has scoured the third-party market to present an "outsider's" view of what's going on in the Atari market. John Barnes follows up his *Print Shop* review with a look at a competing product -- *Page Designer* by Xlent. On the game front, we have reviews of five fundamentally different types of games. War gamers will want to take a look at Evan Brooks' analysis of *Kampfgruppe*. Potential pilots will be interested in Curt Sandler's review of the famous *Flight Simulator* program. Roland Gabeler takes us through the rooms of *Montezuma's Revenge* while Ed Seward introduces us to a new "online" game environment in *Games Computers Play*. And finally, look to *Tips'N'Traps* for just the hint you needed to solve that adventure.

For students of the Atari, we have quite a number of tutorials this month. Jon Smith shows how to produce a vertical blank interrupt using the Action! language. Our ARMUDIC Sysop, Ted Bell, offers some hints for new BBS callers. Mike Barnes discloses some *MegaFiler* secrets. For those of you trying to decipher the structure of your *SynFile* databases, Daniel Moore, the author of *SynFile*, provides a detailed listing of the data structure.

We also had room this month to tap some of the excellent material provided in newsletters of other Atari User Groups. Dennis John explains how to use computed dates in *SynFile*, Dave Webster shows how to disable BASIC on the 800XL, Frank Pazel explains how to transfer *AtariWriter* files over the phone and do block moves.

And, finally, thanks to Bob Kelly for sharing the code to his popular multiple disk-label generator program.

In the next two issues, July and September (remember there is no *Current Notes* in August), we will take an in-depth look at word processors and printers. Most of you are already familiar with *AtariWriter*. But there are new, more powerful word processors either here or soon to be here. Look for evaluations of OSS's *Writer's Tool*, BI's *Paper Clip*, the new *AtariWriter Plus*, and other word processors available. *Current Notes* does not get printers to review. However, our membership already owns a wide variety of printers. Do you know how your printer works? Would you like to share some of that knowledge and experience with the rest of us? Give me a call if you are willing to try a short review of your printer for us.

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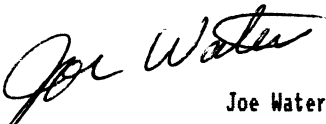
Do You Want an ST?

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The current delivery date for ST's in retail stores is July 8. Atari is providing members of user groups an opportunity to purchase an ST almost a month before they are shipped to the general public. At press time, the "official" letter detailing this offer had not yet been mailed but may very well have arrived by the time you read

this. These systems will consist of a 520ST, a high-resolution monochrome monitor, and a 3.5 inch half-meg disk drive. Software will include the GEM Desktop and a language (LOGO) on disk. The retail price is \$799.95 but a discount should be available. The size of that discount will depend on how many units are ordered by a club. Users will pay their user group which, in turn, will send a check to Atari and arrange for a delivery place and date.

I will act, either through *Current Notes* or Novatari, as a central clearing house for orders. If you are interested in being the first kid on the block with an ST, call me (703-430-1215) and leave your name. I will notify you when details are available.


Joe Waters

=====

SECRET SUNNYVALE CORRESPONDENT

=====

CNR: Lotsa things happening here and there, SSC. We've heard a rumor about a 1-megabyte floppy drive for the eight-bit line. What's up?

SSC: WOW! That's a new one on me! It's just a rumor; but it would be nice.

CNR: What's the latest on the STs. We're all excited and ready to buy, but nothing is here. Are you shipping?

SSC: Ok. There is only the 530-ST for right now. A 1-meg ST could appear by the end of the year. The GEM and languages will be soft-loaded for the time being. Whether or not they become available on ROM has not been determined. You should begin seeing the STs arrive in July. Basically, we want to give the developers and third-party companies time to finish their software so we'll have something for you when you buy your ST. Also, you should know that when the STs are shipped, you'll get 520k of RAM, a 1/2 meg 3.5" micro-disk drive, and a 640x400 resolution monochrome monitor all for about \$800 retail. Tremendous!

CNR: What's happening with the 32-bit machine? We noticed that there was no mention of it at the Ham-burg trade fair.

SSC: You're correct. It wasn't shown. Again, we're getting the products out that can be immediately supported. But don't worry, you should have your 32-bit machine by the end of the year.

CNR: What's the latest on the 80-column monitor? When can we buy one? And, BATTERIES INCLUDED is supposed to have a new 80-column card. Will ATARI-WRITER II support this?

SSC: Well, we haven't seen this 80-column card so I can't say that ATARIWRITER II or any other software will support it. Basically, we asked our retail network about the 80-column monitor. There's not enough demand right now. We've got it and it works great! But, to make 5 or 10 thousand is tremendously expensive for engineering startup costs. You'll see it when enough (like 500,000) people want it.

CNR: With the 130XEs arriving now, what else can we do with that extra 64k besides a second disk drive?

SSC: You should know that several companies are either re-writing existing software and/or are developing new software to take advantage of the extra storage. Lucas Films, Peach-Tree, XLent, Electronic Arts, D.S.S., M.P.P., just to name a few. Also, Synapse is revising SynFile and SynCalc. The AXLON memory technology is not compatible with ATARI's bank-selecting algorithm. So some software does not function properly with the 130 XE RAM. So keep your shirt on; you'll see more programs. Also, MPP should be releasing a 5 to 10 megabyte hard-disk drive in the next few months. Further, our ECI (Extended Cartridge Interface) will give developers and hobbyists more creative freedom with 14 extra socket pins and internal power supply connections. The separate Luminence and Chroma is back on the XE. This really is the best machine yet! Everyone really likes our keyboard and the overall feel, too!

CNR: Speaking of software and firmware, what ever became of the PLATO cartridge and your Learning Phone system?

SSC: The Learning Phone is finally making its way out to you. The developers wanted to charge \$25 to sign-up and bill you at (approx) \$7.25 an hour. We wanted to get a lot, I mean a LOT of people interested. But \$32.25 PLUS the cartridge price? No way! Our negotiations convinced these guys of the tremendous resource they have in all the present and future ATARI owners. Once they saw the light, the product changed and you should see PLATO with the first year membership (\$25) FREE and your first hour (\$7.25) FREE. I think everyone will be happy on this one.

CNR: Speaking of being 'happy', we need to be happy about the new DOS 2.5. We haven't seen it and you said you'd be mailing us a copy. What's up?

SSC: Yes, there was a delay in preparation of the final draft of the manual. But, if you're in a hurry, the entire DOS plus all nine utilities is available from CompuServe under the ATARI SIG in the utilities database. There is some documentation to get you by, just wait for the final manual for all the details.

CNR: Speaking of manuals, how will we hackers and tinkers get to play with the new XEs and other hardware?

SSC: You've hit on an important topic. Like I said, you won't be disappointed. Sometime, and hopefully by the Fall, you'll be able to buy ONE book with ALL the technical documentation, PEEKS and POKES, and schematics for ALL of ATARI's products. You can imagine the work required to put one of these things together. Have patience! It WILL be worth it!

CNR: We noticed that ATARI is back on the 'books' (no pun intended) for the JUNE CES. What happened?

SSC: The CES show staff really liked our performance at the Winter show. We were a hit! Simply, they negotiated with us and insisted that we show up. They gave us wonderful incentives, so there's no reason, now, why we shouldn't be there. By the way, we'll be on the second floor....looking over Commodore's booth. Just the luck of the draw.

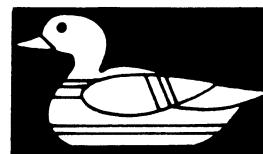
CNR: Well, since you brought it up, how's Commodore doing with their Amiga?

SSC: We hear that they have a LOT of inventory and at \$2,000 apiece, it will be some time before they sell out!

CNR: For all of us musicians, electronic and otherwise, when can we 'note' the arrival of the XEM?

SSC: The XEM is built, but our automated testing has yet to be completed. Think about it.... we need to write a diagnostic and test procedure to verify the workings of our Amy chip. There are SO many parameters and features of this magical machine, that we're really straining our creativity to test every possible combination. We have high standards for quality control and want to have 100% of these products going out the door in working condition. Hopefully, you'll see the XEM out in your neighborhood by late Fall. For the meantime, the 130 XE will help out with a MIDI interface.

CNR: What an earful! See you in Chicago!



Notice to Advertisers

Effective July 1, because of the increased printing costs caused by the 50 percent plus increase in circulation during the first half of this year, Current Notes advertising rates for the remainder of this year will be increased. A full page ad will cost \$70, a half page ad \$40, and a quarter page ad \$25. As before, prepayment of multiple ads will yield discounts of up to 20 percent off the single insertion advertising charge.

ATARI SCUTTLEBITS*by Bob Kelly*

The rumor mill is keeping Atari addicts in a semi-conscious state. This month's column will attempt to clarify the situation by indicating which rumors have some validity as opposed to those that are, to say the least, in doubt. There are essentially two areas of interest - the 8 bit and 16 bit markets.

8-bit (XL & XE)

1. Atari Corp.: You should know by now that the 65XE has been put on hold, the AMIE sound chip has experienced minor technical difficulties resulting in delayed introduction, the portable has been killed (I wanted one), and the 130XE is available on the local market.

The "hold" decision relating to the 65XE is based upon the fact that distributors and dealers have 800XLs still in stock (retail price for the 800XLs has dropped again - \$89, buy one for parts).

The most realistic Atari rumors, as determined after talks with numerous sources, concerning the introduction of new hardware or software are:

- a. The new line of Atari printers will be released in June.
- b. AtariWriter Plus will be available by July (80-column capability, proof-reader, and access all available RAM in 130XE). Proof-reader will be made available for the old AtariWriter (64K version) by July.
- c. Silent Bulter will be available for the XL and XE by July.

AtariWriter Plus and Proof-reader may turn out to be the most difficult items to get this summer. Demand should be exceptionally high, if they are as good as indicated.

Harder to verify rumors concerning Atari's plans are:

- a. In July a 1-megabyte floppy disk drive for the 130XE will be introduced. It will be connected via the expansion port.
- b. There will be no regular 3 1/2" drive for the 8-bit computer line. This one makes sense that's why I have some doubt.
- c. The Atari 80-column monitor is on indefinite hold. Translated, this means, according to one source, Atari is looking for the box to give the 80-column monitor a decent burial. Atari, on the other hand, claims that the monitor works and it is just on the back-burner for now, i.e., a higher corporate priority is assigned to getting out the ST. This is a hard one to call; I will accept Atari's version for now.

2. Broderbund/Synapse: Synapse, in case you didn't know, was bought out by Broderbund. If you want Synapse product information, you have to talk to Broderbund to find out what's under development at Synapse. Unless it is a technical problem, then..... Forget it, I am getting myself confused!

Synapse just released an upgraded version (1.01) of Synfile+ (corrected a few bugs). Currently Synapse is working on upgrading the entire SYN series to work with the 128K XE. Improvements are not being made to any of the programs beyond the capability to access the additional memory. It should be available in mid-June, according to Broderbund. An upgrade policy was not yet established at press time. However, after June 1, call Tammy Chance at Broderbund on (415) 479-1170 for information. Incidentally, according to their spokesperson, Broderbund has absolutely nothing new under development for the Atari.

3. Batteries Included (BI): I talked to Batteries concerning their support for the new Atari line which appears, to me, substantial. My discussions covered the following:

- a. BI will market this summer (August?), an 80-column board to fit into the cartridge slot of the 800XL and 130XE. The resolution, according to BI, is almost as good as the Bit-3 board (800 computer). The Bit-3 board's original cost was roughly \$350. The board from BI is to be priced around **\$65**. Assuming claims are true, BI could have another big winner to go with HomePak.
- b. Paper Clip, BI's new word processing program, will be upgraded to take advantage of the additional memory in the 130XE. Look for the upgraded version toward the end of summer (I have not tested this program).

A slight, but important diversion for a moment. I sought Batteries estimate of the effect of pirating upon HomePak sales (this integrated package won several software awards in 1984). This firm took a chance. It produced a top quality package for under \$50. The disk is not protected. The rationale for no protection scheme was that a top quality product, reasonably priced, would dissuade most would-be pirates. It was a market experiment (incidentally, I bought several copies as Christmas presents - what better recommendation?).

Sadly, HomePak has been pirated fairly heavily. Publicly BI says they are glad it wasn't pirated more. BI would not give me a number for sales, but HomePak is number 3 on the Billboard list of best sellers. In other words, they are making money on this program. However, what will BI and other major software firms do in the future? Actions speak louder than words. I refer to the precautions being taken with Paper Clip. You will have to have a coded key to fit into the joystick port in order for Paper Clip to function properly. As I write this I am listening to a very melancholy piece of music (Dvorak) and thinking "will Atari users ever learn why software developers are reluctant to write for this machine....?"

4. Micro Bits Peripheral Products (MPP): The folks that brought you the MPP modem have stated to me that a hard disk option for the Atari 800XL and 130XE will be available in July. The retail price will be \$999 (\$800 discounted - my guess). It is a 10-megabyte drive that will plug into the parallel port. According to MPP, OSS has been commissioned/asked/requested to write a DOS permitting subdirectories, etc., in order to access the full capability of the drive. The timing on this product seems optimistic. In other words, the individual pieces may be available soon, but they will not be in a usable system form for some time (DOS, etc.). How about late fall?

5. Matrix Software: The Infinity integrated software series has received significant attention - notably from Antic and CompuServe. Let me quote from the April issue of Antic:

"The undisputable star of Atari's new software is Infinity, a second-generation integrated program that's more powerful than Lotus 1-2-3. Yet it will sell at only \$49.95 for XEs and about \$70 for the STs..... Admittedly, all this is a bit hard to believe about software that can operate with as little as 64K memory. A developer of the program told Antic that Infinity was able to pack in so many advanced features by "optimizing" the assembly language compilation."

This article, as well as several others, left the impression that the software was ready to go and introduction awaited only the hardware. I decided to call Matrix Software and ask them directly about their product.

I tried to find the telephone number. Ma Bell's directory assistance informed me that there was no listing for Matrix Software in Cambridge, Mass. I was stunned (OK, maybe just surprised). I had the impression that Matrix Software was a well established outfit. Other people were contacted. Some sources stated that the Infinity Series may end up being vaporware. Others assured me that Infinity does exist but the progress reported on it's integrated software package has been exaggerated.

It is difficult to evaluate the situation given the information I have at hand. However, I can respond to Antic and its misleading report by saying, "Yes, it is hard to believe since I can't find the place these guys optimize their infinities at".

16-bit Market (ST)

1. Atari Corp.: Atari has announced that the new 16-bit ST will not be marketed in the U.S. until July 8, 1985 and there will be no 128K or 256K STs produced. Initially, there will be only the 520ST. Canada and Europe will get them first based upon economic/marketing considerations. Atari has also announced or indicated to its distributors the following:

a. A one megabyte (RAM) ST will be introduced some time prior to Christmas.

b. The 520ST will be sold only as a package with one 3 1/2" disk drive, high-res monochrome monitor, and soft-

ware -- "JackWrite, JackDraw, JackDesk, and Jack -- (the names could change to protect the innocent)".

c. Do not look for substantial discounts off the list price of the ST. It will be sold only through computer dealers - mass market outlets (e.g. Toys-R-Us, etc.) will not carry the ST.

d. There will be a color monitor for the ST in late 1985. The hard disk drive will be 15 megabytes and will soon be going into production.

e. Sources have reported that the operating system for the Apple "Mac" and Atari "Jack" may be much more similar to each other than was originally believed. Thus, "porting over" Apple programs may not be as difficult and time-consuming. I still have strong doubts on the accuracy of this rumor.

f. The planned 32-bit computer, dubbed TT, will be delayed further. In my opinion, early 1986 appears to be a reasonable date for introduction.

g. There will be an integrated spreadsheet program available for the ST called "VIP". According to my source, it looks very much like Lotus 1-2-3. VIP will be available for purchase in July for less than \$100. I cannot comment at this time on the quality of this program.

A friendly word to the wise at Atari Headquarters. Nothing has been said about when the 6800 Assembler and C Compiler will be made available, at reasonable prices, to users. If Atari wants lots of public domain programs to support its ST marketing efforts then it should make every effort to have these tools for sale in the very near future. I know capable people who are interested in writing and unfortunately, nothing is available to support such efforts. In fact, I was prompted to write this little hint by several people.

2. Digital Research (DRI): As far as can be determined, the only computer for which software can be developed by third parties in conjunction with the GEM system without royalties being paid to DRI is the Atari ST. The interesting point here is that this financial incentive may help get more Atari commercial programs on the market faster than would otherwise have occurred. Software houses in these times can use the extra revenues particularly if designing for a "hot" box. Of course, how "hot" is yet to be determined in Atari's case.

Nibblebits:

- **Ramrod XL (Newell Industries):** Did you purchase Ramrod XL for your 800XL (800 "B" operating system, Machine Language monitor, etc.)? Are you wishing it could be transferred to the 130XE you would like to buy? Well, it can, with slight modification. Write or call Newell Industries (214) 423-1781 to obtain instructions. If you want to know more about Ramrod XL (a must for a serious 8 bit'er), see the Analog Review of December, 1984.

- **Continental Software:** Several months ago, this column discussed the merits of "Tax Advantage" (liked very

much) as well as their policy regarding disk back-up (stupid, should supply two disks at purchase). Would you believe, I received my back-up disk on April 15? Honestly! Need I say more on this topic?

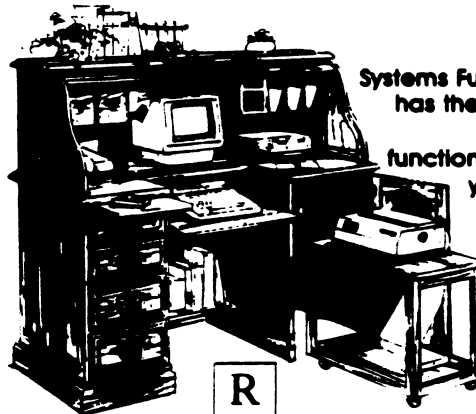
- While on the subject of taxes, Congressional conferees have agreed to a repeal of the requirement for keeping a daily log of business computer use for Federal tax purposes. You, as a tax payer, will still be required to keep records but they need not be "contemporaneous" with usage. The change has not yet been forwarded to the President for his signature into law.

- Have you wondered why the STs will have a side slot for add-on ROM cartridges? This is how software manufacturers will copy protect their programs - a variation of the key approach being used by Paper Clip. The problem will come in how to use programs that are heavily copy protected with the hard disk.

I have been quick to criticize Atari in the past when I thought it warranted. However, praise is usually harder to come by from critics such as I. In my view, Atari has attempted to satisfy user interest as well as meet scheduled product introduction dates better than originally expected. So far, so good. Keep it up Atari.

See you next month....

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Tips 'N Traps**Stevenson, Francese and Burke**

There have been a few calls and user-submitted messages entered concerning the 'Tips 'N' Traps' column. On ARMUDIC, for instance, there have been 11 messages so far, and I have edited some of them to be used in this month's column. We will restrain from using solutions to big adventures as long as there are messages on the message base to turn to. All messages seen in this month's column are as they are seen on ARMUDIC with some changes to accommodate the utility used to generate this column. Once again, it's the 'ADVENTURE Q&A' message conference on the ARMUDIC bulletin board system for NOVATARI and other regional users groups. The number is (703) 569-8305. Keep those calls and messages coming!

Subject: STARCROSS

Q. I wander all over the blasted ship. I never can get the rod from the rat person. Maybe that's not important. I do get several rods, anyway. When I climb to the top of the chamber with the big field and unicorn etc., I never can get the hatch open and run out of air. What is the purpose of the rods? How do I get that hatch open?

-Rick Reaser

A. Rick, if I understand your problem correctly, insert the Yellow Rod into the Yellow slot to light the initially dark area. Insert the Red Rod in Second Red Slot to start manufacture of oxygen. Try playing around with the other slots and see what happens.

-Jim Stevenson

Subject: DALLAS QUEST

Q. I know I can't carry anything down the ladder in the general store, so how do I get all my junk into the cave? Any help would be appreciated by my wife, who is now convinced I've gone off the deep end.

-Dave Meyer

A. Dave, go down the ladder with only the flashlight. When you go down, you will see a sign that tells you the directions you can go in. DROP THE FLASHLIGHT! I forget the exact direction, but one of them is right back to that building above the ladder. From there, put everything you might need into the knapsack. Then go back down the ladder. You will have to experiment with what you think you might need so don't give up! Hope I helped.

-Sysop of ARMUDIC

Subject: DALLAS QUEST ADVICE

Just a little clue for all of you stuck at the cannibal village: The only objects you will need for the rest of the adventure are:

1. Ring
2. Photo
3. Tobacco
4. Coconuts
5. Mirror

6. Flashlight
7. Eggs
8. And knapsack (to carry all inventory).

That's it, after this there is really no problems left to complete this adventure!!

-Steve Francese

Subject: HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY

Q. Does anyone know how to get the Babble Fish?

-"Muscleman Jr."

A. Hey, Muscleman, you get the Babble Fish by putting the towel on the floor, hanging the gown on the hook, putting the satchel over the robot panel, and putting the junk mail on the satchel. Then push the button.fpr

-Dean Edward Miller

Q. Does anybody know how to turn on the Infinite Improbability drive? I plugged in the plug to the small box, but I can't get Brownian Motion out of the Advanced Tea Substitute.

-Dean Edward Miller

A. Dean, I think I'm stuck in the same place. What have you tried, and what small box are you referring to? I plugged the large plug into the receptacle on the console on the bridge, but there's still the small plug to do something with.

-Dick Knisely

A. You must have three items: the spare drive, the atomic vector plotter, and the ats. if you have all three, hookup is simple, then turn switch. HOWEVER, hooking the contraption up to the control console on the bridge is best done after a SAVE. There's a time and a place for everything.

-Chuck Shukis

Subject: INCREDIBLE HULK

Q. Anyone out there playing Incredible Hulk? I'm stuck at 11 gems. What do I do in the Chief Examiner's office? And what do I do about the bees?

-Barry Burke

A. There's nothing to do in the Chief Examiner's office until you get all 100 points. You might remember him saying "I'm not ready for you to come here yet", or something to that extent. Keep up the good work.

-Jim Stevenson

Well, that's all for this month's questions. They're coming in almost every other day now. And a reminder to those people who have sent and/or read messages, keep them on the 'ADVENTURE Q&A' message base. DO NOT DELETE THEM! They will be published in Tips 'N' Traps monthly, and other people are probably stuck in the same places, and in desperate need of some kind of hint to pull them through. Until next month!

Going Online

by Ed Seward

Games Computers Play (Signup fee \$30, hourly rate \$6/hour)

This month I am going to take a look at a service that is still fairly new. The name of the service can be misleading in that it is not set up solely for game playing. Also, there is a major difference between Games Computers Play and other online services. GCP takes advantage of the Atari's graphic capabilities. (Those of you that get A.N.A.L.O.G. magazine should look at page 91 of the June issue to see three sample screens.) Instead of a main menu a user moves a 'droid' through 'The City'. GCP has organized the system as a city with a walkway leading to the various buildings and doors.

Before I describe 'The City', let me cover a few other items. The software I am using is a pre-production version dated 4/30/85. (This is the second version I have used. This update was provided at no charge just as future updates will be provided to subscribers at no charge.) The version I received used three disk sides; the 'Boot Disk', 'The City Disk' and the 'Games Disk'. The documentation gives step by step instructions for setting up the 'Boot Disk'. It does not come ready-to-go so that you can choose your own DOS, disk density and modem combination. There are only a few simple steps to the process. When you boot up their computer with the 'Boot Disk', the program dials the TYMNET number and accesses GCP automatically -- if your modem is capable of autodial.

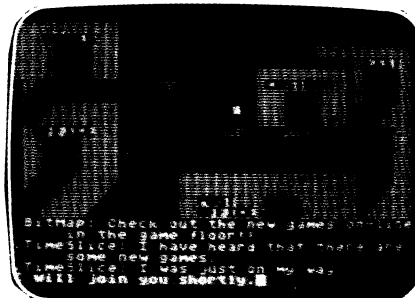
Customs. On making contact with GCP, you see a pair of large doors. The doors slide open to expose 'Customs'. (Now is a good time to switch to 'The City Disk'.) Customs serves the expected purpose of validating the log-on with requests for name and password. GCP signifies a valid log-on by making the wall holding the big doors disappear and by lighting the four corners of the field surrounding your droid. Each caller is given a droid to manipulate through the City. You have control over your droid's movement whenever the four corners of the field are lit.

Along the wall that is straight ahead is a terminal, a telephone and a door. You can use the telephone to get in touch with another person who is also online. Among other things, the terminal can be used to find out who is online and where they are. One can also use the terminal to request the system to transport your droid to another location. Now, if we look at the door we will see that it is labeled "THE CITY" and that it has a doormat in front of it.

One now uses their joystick to move the droid over to the doormat and press the fire button. The lights in the corners of the droids field go out and the Atari spends the next thirty seconds or so loading 'The City'.

The City. The screens of The City are from a somewhat overhead view. The City scrolls vertically and hori-

zontally as you move your droid. A partial map of The City is shown in the screen below:



The Post Office. Let's stroll over to the door/building labeled "POST OFFICE". Place the droid on the doormat and press the fire button. With the exception of the occasional use of windows, there are no 'graphics' displays in the Post Office. On entering the Post Office you are shown the Main Mailer Menu. Selections are made with the joystick. The usual message base commands are here. Also, the upload and download commands are in this menu.

The only negative thoughts I have on GCP are about the Post Office. First, the speed with which messages are displayed is a little slow. Secondly, there is no capture capability. However, you can use the download command to save a message to your disk drive. The program library is set up as messages. In a download of 9069 bytes the rate of transfer averaged out to 17 bytes/second. (This is about the same rate as Compuserve at a busy time using TSCOPE.)

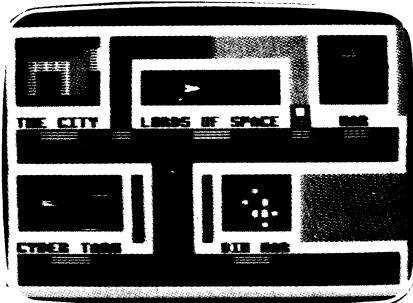
There are several advantages to this Post Office. For instance, there are quite a few different ways to scan messages. Among the options for scanning messages are: search for a string contained in the subject, messages to or from a particular person, messages sent during a given time of the day and messages sent during a particular calendar period. There are numerous ways to use these options both individually and collectively. Also, each user has their own mailbox. Or, how about setting up your own mailing lists so that you make up one message and send it to everyone on a particular list. Another option is to add one's name to a 'public mailing list', such as for those interested in a particular topic or game. Thus, whenever messages are sent using that list everyone on that list will get the news. I'll leave the finer details of the Post Office to the GCP documentation.

To leave the Post Office, just choose the appropriate menu option and the Atari will once again load 'The City'. I should note here that when you are 'walking' through The City, you can see the droids of the other people who are online. Only your own droid will display the four yellow corners of the field though.

The Offices and Social. Two other buildings that I'll just mention briefly are the "OFFICES" and "SOCIAL". The Offices, as you might expect, are the offices of GCP. The Social Building is, of course, for socializing. There

are quite a few rooms in the Social Building. The main purpose of the rooms is to provide various gathering places for conferences or 'conversation'. The Social Building is also the location for participating in a role playing game called "Spacelanes". Spacelanes takes place many years in the future "after the fall of the First Galactic Empire". I have not tried this game, but GCP provides a good deal of documentation on the workings of and the idea behind the Spacelanes.

The Games Building. Upon entering the Games Building, you are shown a room containing graphic samples from four games. Two of the games, "LORDS OF SPACE" and "WAR" have not been implemented yet. GCP hopes to activate both games later in the summer. The two games that are up and running are "BIO WAR" and "CYBER TANK".



Bio War. This is an offshoot of that old computer game called "LIFE". Just what do I mean? In this game a cell only grows if the level of nearby friendly population is correct. The idea of the game is to get your colony of cells to grow. Bio War is for one to six players. Thus, with the additional players increasing the 'types' of cells trying to grow makes this game a lot of fun. The graphics symbols used in the game are easy to interpret. (Necessary considering the 25 second time limit on turns.) There is nothing visually outstanding in the graphics of the playing screen. However, in my opinion the playing screen is well suited to the game. Another thing to point out is that in both Bio War and Cyber Tank one can join or leave a game at any time without disrupting it.

Cyber Tank. The first display for this game gives the player a choice of seven levels. The higher the level the more 'building' points one gets to build their tank with. After selecting a level, another screen is displayed. This screen is the one used to select features for a tank. On this screen, one has a choice between selecting their tank's weaponry themselves, using the last tank they built for this level, or if no previous tanks have been built at this level then the computer can build one for the player. The last option is the best one for beginners. The choice for weapons are three strengths of lasers and missiles. One can also control the amount of armor and power within certain constraints. If you choose things right you can add in the ECM system for greater scanning range and weapon accuracy. The graphics of this screen are excellent and take advantage of the Atari's capability. From here one goes to the combat screen.

The combat screen is divided into five areas: message or communications across the bottom, weapons' status and

control, power indicator, general tank information and of course the playing area itself. The playing area occupies a little less than half the screen and uses good detailed graphics to portray the local terrain. Your tank will show up in green and the enemy in red. On first viewing the screen, the cycling time for turns seems a little slow but is within bearable limits. (More on this later.) You use the joystick to select and control the various options. To play this game it is best to put your name on the CyberTank mailing list in the Post Office. The CyberTank mailing list is used for info related to the game, but most importantly is that it is used to issue challenges. By being on the mailing list you will know when a get together is planned. Or, you can issue a challenge yourself if you just want to try and get a big game going on a particular day. How would I summarize my feelings about Cyber Tank? When I first heard about online game playing, this is what I thought it would be like. Well, I'll take the 'Bailout' option to leave the game then leave the Games Building.

System Speed. You will remember that at two points I mentioned the system was a little slow. The people at GCP are already testing another version of the software that will make the games and mail work 50% faster. Users of the system will be sent the newer version free so one doesn't have to worry about being left with outdated software.

Cost. How about the monetary aspects of using Games Computers Play? The \$30 signup fee will be credited to your account, thus for \$30 you get the software, documentation and five hours of time. Also, the \$6 hourly rate does include the access to TYMNET. This means there are no hidden additional expenses incurred in using Games Computers Play as long as there is a TYMNET number in your local dialing area. Those wishing to pay the hourly rate using a check must do so in advance of the actual usage. (This is a standard practice for online systems. If you use a credit card then they are billed for the time as they use it.)

As an Atari owner you may be interested to know that GCP will be for Ataris only - at least through the end of the year.

MPP Problems. I should mention that at this point the software will not work with MPP modems. GCP is working on that with MPP. However, there is no assurance that MPP and GCP will be able to change the problem. I didn't think to inquire about compatibility of the software with the R-Verter.

Summary. Earlier on I mentioned my feelings about the various portions of Games Computers Play. How would I sum it up? If you're into gaming, even if you only play occasionally - GCP is great. If a person doesn't like to play an occasional game on their Atari, then GCP is not for them. Also, I should say I think GCP is charging a fair price for the use of their system.

Well, its time to use the only door I haven't covered - "EXIT".

BATTLE BYTES:*M. Evan Brooks***KAMPFGRUPPE**

KAMPFGRUPPE is SSI's new opus of tactical warfare on the Eastern Front during World War II. Before beginning the review of this effort, this author would like to state a personal bias -- in favor of operational games covering historical battles and generally against smaller tactical scenarios at battalion level or below. Thus, the author's admitted prejudices would seem to have disposed of this game handily.

But such is not the case. KAMPFGRUPPE (literally "battle group", i.e. reconstituted remnants of combat units stitched together to form a coherent formation) is FOR THE ADVANCED GAMER but constitutes a MUST HAVE in every wargamer's library ... complex in scope, relatively simple in execution and elegant throughout.

KAMPFGRUPPE bears more than a striking resemblance to PANZERBLITZ (Avalon Hill). The latter was a best-seller in the early 1970's and truly represented the cutting edge of board wargame development. Even today, PANZERBLITZ remains a best seller and virtually all wargamers have at least played this game. SSI's computer version covers the same period, and even the instruction booklets appear suspiciously similar (each portrays pictures of a gun/weapon/vehicle and explains usage and periods thereof).

KAMPFGRUPPE has adapted PANZERBLITZ into the age of the computer. Covering battalion level engagements and below (i.e. segments of major battles and smaller peripheral conflicts), the computer allows two innovations: map creation and line of sight. With the disk, you may create (and save) almost any tactical battle on the Eastern Front during World War II; thus, you may create and replay all the board wargames currently collecting dust on the shelf (computer PANZERGRUPPE GUDERIAN or KHARKOV anyone?). The line of sight rules are so elegant and simple that the wonder is why they have not appeared earlier. In most tactical board wargames, there is great vexation and dispute as to whether or not a unit may see and fire on an opponent. Firm friendships have failed due to poor eyesight and the call for the dreaded "straight line" measurement. But KAMPFGRUPPE has solved the problem; simply declare the unit and hit the letter "V" (view). All areas visible to the declared unit will turn orange -- simple, fast and accurate.

This is not to say that KAMPFGRUPPE is without fault. However, its faults are minor in nature and when contrasted with the overall tenor of the game, KAMPFGRUPPE has become an instant classic. The only faults this reviewer has discovered are design limitations -- computer input is via keyboard. While this is normal for Apple systems, the use of joystick input would have been much faster and easier for the user. This shortfall makes it more tedious to enter and change orders to your various units. The only other shortfall concerns the commands

visible on the screen; certain commands are not visible, although they are described in the documentation, e.g. (P)assenger allows one to determine what units are riding on what vehicles. Until the user is completely familiar with the rules, such commands are forgotten and only those visible on the screen are utilized. As soon as the consumer re-reads the documentation, this minor failing is alleviated.

So much for failures. As for successes, the list goes on and on. Documentation is virtually complete; unlike the normal computer wargame, there is sufficient hard data herein to satisfy everyone. In terms of opponent play, the program covers the gamut -- the computer may play either German, Russian, neither or both. This reviewer strongly suggests that your initial game be played with the computer taking both sides. Be prepared; contact will not be made for several turns, and you may wonder if anything is happening. But when the FLOT (forward line of troops) initiates contact, the action is fast and furious. In most situations, the computer forces move cautiously before contact. Therefore, a quick advance on the gamer's part should allow one to secure the objective and set up a defensive perimeter in meeting engagements; this is a large advantage.

Also, be advised! The documentation means what it says. The rules suggest that the user begin with a small-level generated battle, as opposed to the historical set-piece battles already on the disk. PLEASE HEED THIS ADVICE unless you are into defeat and masochism. The larger battles are complex, time-consuming and definitely not for the beginner (even if you have been wargaming for years). Computer generated scenarios may be prepared in minutes, and it is only after several smaller scenarios that the historical scenarios may be tackled. As is normal with SSI products, games in progress may be saved at the end of turns, and disks may be initialized and formatted even after a game is begun. The save commands are standard and easily applicable.

In playing against the computer Soviet, this reviewer would like to offer the following suggestions. Meeting engagements offer roughly comparable forces. Proper use of combined arms concepts will generally defeat the computer. Similarly, a computer pursuit may also be readily defeated. However, an assault or a pursuit of the computer will test your leadership abilities to the limit.

Strategic hints are not applicable in a game at this level. Tactical hints are given in the documentation, and generally reflect common sense. For additional tactical hints, this reviewer recommends MG F.W. Von Mellenthin's PANZER BATTLES (the classic German account of armored warfare in World War II; available in paperback). Combined arms tactics coupled with proper use of artillery will defeat the Soviet or Fascist beast. In too many board wargames, artillery is misplaced and then allowed to be redirected since everyone makes similar mistakes. The computer will not allow this form of cheating. If your artillery is misdirected, then it will take another fire mission to rectify your error in fire control. Hard, yes -- but realistic!

Depending on your hard-core nature, the computer will allow you to choose your own task force and then deploy it. Of course, for those not wishing to delve so deeply, the computer will also select your task force and automatically deploy it. Note that the deployment is not OPTIMUM; rather, it is a hasty deployment -- good, but you may well do better.

Pay attention to terrain, weapon ranges and probable objectives. Units may be moved singly or by formations (the latter is only available as long as the parent headquarters unit exists; therefore, don't risk command elements for short-term gains unless they will prove decisive). Command control is also simulated in that units moving out of the span of command are slower to react.

As the rules state, weapon ranges may be changed from minimum to maximum. What this means is that if you wish to reach an objective, then you may have to order your units to withhold fire (units generally deploy for combat and do not move as quickly). But this holds its own risks in that the unit may move into an ambush and be destroyed by enemy weapon systems. Thus, there is a constant dilemma in choosing optimum engagement range coupled with minimization of risk.

Careful attention must be paid to the advantages and disadvantages of each unit. Reconnaissance units must be used as "point", and the heavy casualties taken will quickly point out the hazards of "First in Battle". Of course, the most critical element is proper use of artillery fire; indirect fire elements must be placed as to be able to engage enemy units without exposing themselves to direct fire. Counter-battery fire may well prove unavoidable, but risk minimization is the key.

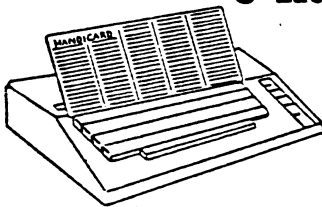
Suppression of enemy units followed by combined arms close assaults will win the day. But as the user reflects on the casualties taken, all but the most callous will be shaken by the loss of life.

KAMPFGRUPPE retails for \$59.95, but may be purchased by mail for c. \$35.00. This reviewer heartily recommends its addition to the Wargamer's Essential Library. It is not a game that one can play directly upon booting it from the box, but the investment of careful study of the documentation coupled with the play mechanics will pay dividends. Complex, playable and realistic -- SSI has come up with a true winner. HIGHEST RECOMMENDATION.

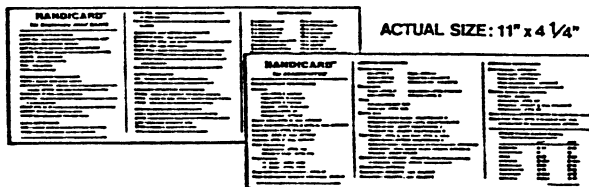
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GAMEVIEWS

by Roland Gabeler

Montezuma's Revenge

Revenge is sweet, *Montezuma's Revenge*, that is. Especially when the price drops to \$15.00. Although, I must admit, I thought it was worth the original \$34.95 asking price. Oh no, you say, after last month's slobbering over *Ballblazer*, he's going to love this one too! Well, almost, but *Revenge* is certainly not the newest innovation in computer games. Not only does it fail to break new ground, but in graphics, the size and texture of the figures and elements are old hat, not even as good as most new games. The play mechanics are nothing new, as you sweep screen to screen (room to room) to complete a level. So, what's so great (or 'sweet') about this game? The 'old fashioned' (if anything in computerdom can be called that!) play mechanics make this game easy to play, but difficult to master.

Enough of the overview, let's talk about the plot. You are the character Panama Joe, seeking to explore and gain wealth in the Aztec emperor's fortress. The immediate goal in each of nine levels, is to solve the level by reaching the treasure room. A level consists of many rooms with death dealing challenges of skulls (jumping and rolling), spiders, laser gates, dropping floors, snakes, and fire pits. As in the *Miner 2049er* game, you must master jumping, running jumps, and most importantly, TIMING. These skills are not difficult to master in *Revenge*, and you will most likely be quite good at it in ten minutes of gameplay. There is no timer in this game, so you can rest in the safe area in most screens. You begin the game with five lives and gain an additional life at 10,000 points (fairly easily obtained in early screens). Points are gained at 1,000 a crack, by picking up the jewels scattered throughout the fortress. You also gain points by picking up various other objects, but only a couple of hundred. Those other objects are far more important for their strategic value than the points. They are keys, required to open locked doors, an amulet, for (very) temporary protection, torches, to light completely dark rooms, and most vital, the swords, to kill all above named monsters.

You begin the game by sliding down a rope into your first room. Therein you are faced with locked doors, a bouncing skull, and a key. To obtain the key, you must dodge the skull twice, or lose one life. Note, that I said 'one' life. That's one really nice feature of this game, only one life can be lost to a monster, then he is gone. This is not true however, of other obstacles, such as fire pits and missed jumps over high chasms. Joe can never survive a fall further than one and a forth his height.

So, you move from room to room, grabbing jewels, swords etc., avoiding monsters, jumping fires, monsters and pits until suddenly you enter a 'twilight' room full of jewels and rope ladders. That is the treasure room, and the first place in which you are timed. You have a limited amount of time to climb the ropes and jump from rope to rope gathering jewels. When you miss a jump, or the time is expired, you vanish and reappear at the entry point to

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ARMUDIC UPDATE
(703) 569-8305

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Remember, you must apply for a password and then be validated before you receive the high membership access level. Validation should take no longer than two days. Also, when you apply for a password, remember to say YES at the prompt when signing off that asks you, "Do you wish to save your password for future access?" If you do not do this, we will have no way of knowing that you were online and, of course, you will not be validated.

Do not add any personal names to the list of BBS names. This file in the data base area is for Bulletin Board numbers only. If anyone's number gets on this list, they will start receiving calls and get an ear full of modem!!! Yes, several members did put their names on this list and we had to quickly delete them.

If for some reason you have applied for password validation and did not receive it in two days, simply re-apply and leave a message to sysop using the "L" command. We can easily miss those of you who are brand new members. Just re-apply and we will straighten it out.

Many families have more than one person who calls the BBS. Each person must have his or her own password. Password integrity must not be breached - one password per person.

The addition of the "UPS", our backup power supply, has given us reliable uninterrupted service. We have fixed many of the "Bugs" in the program and will be fixing others and then polishing up the program. Soon we will add some features. One of the first will be an area which describes the downloads. However, this may not be as easy as it seems because the downloads change so frequently. As many of you know there are descriptions of many of the downloads in the "Members" base now. This reminds me -- do not upload to "All". Upload only to "Higher" access or to Sysop if you wish.

The Board is becoming very busy so just keep trying if you receive a busy signal. In next month's issue of *Current Notes*, we will discuss some of the features of our Bulletin Board.

Give us a call,
Ted & David Bell, Sysops
Bruce Blake, Technical Sysop

=====

the next level. Fortunately, you get to bring all remaining lives with you. Each new level is increased in difficulty and has many of the same room layouts from the previous level, but with newly positioned objects.

To summarize, I paid \$29.95, less a \$10.00 rebate (10 weeks later), for this game, but my family got far more value than either price. I would estimate, we have over thirty hours of play before we moved on to other games. Now that some stores have lowered the price to \$15.00, the value is obvious, if you want a relaxing puzzle game to solve.

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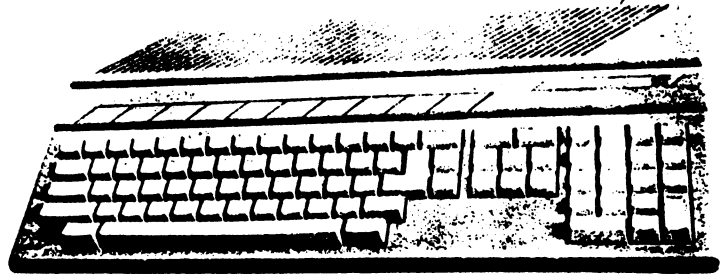
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Action! Action*by Jon Smith*

This month's installment of Action! Action will present a set of PROCedures allowing most Action users, advanced and novice, to utilize the powers of a vertical blank interrupt (hereafter referred to as a VBI or VBlank). If you're a more advanced user and already understand VBIs, skip ahead to the section discussing the PROCedures.

What is a VBI? Every 60th of a second, your Atari runs a program in the Operating System that updates various registers, such as joystick ports, keyboard, etc. VBIs recieve their name because they occur when the TV screen is blank for an instant; that is, when the computer has time to spare because its not drawing the video display. There are two stages of VBlank, immediate and direct. Immediate is fine for most applications, and the PROCedures listed below default to that. For more information on VBIs and VBlank, as well as many other useful features of your Atari, I suggest you read De Re Atari.

A user can write his or her own routine that will function during VBlank. This can be extremely valuable. Such routines must be written in machine language, i.e., not BASIC. Since Action compiles directly to machine language, it can be used to write a VBI.

The PROCedures listed here will allow you to set up an Action routine as a VBI. The individual routines are documented within the program, however the following paragraphs give a general overview of how to set up your VBI.

To set up your VBI, first write the actual routine. Don't let it be excessively long, as time is limited during a VBlank. It's a good idea to save a routine before using as a VBI, because should it be too long, strange things may happen. Note that five lines of machine code must be listed before the actual routine, and six after, as shown in the listing. Type in these lines EXACTLY as shown.

To make your VBI start executing every 60th of a second, call the SetVBlank PROCedure as documented in the listing. Argument one of the call to SetVBlank should be the name of your VBI PROCedure. The DisengageVBI PROCedure does exactly what its name implies: it causes your VBI to cease to function. It can be started again through the SetVBlank PROCedure.

The listing, if typed in exactly as listed, executes a "twirling colors" VBI. This simply rotates the color of the border. The program will break, but the Operating System will continue to call the VBI until System Reset is pressed or it is disengaged in some other way. Note that editing a file while a VBI is running is not wise. If the file is expanded, it may overrun the code for your VBI, thus crashing the system. During I/O with an external device, such as a disk drive, the VBI will temporarily stop functioning. However, when the I/O is over, it will automatically continue.

Advanced users: If you need to access a Direct VBI, the necessary changes are listed within the program.

That's about it for VBI's in Action. If you have any problems setting up VBIs, feel free to call me at (703) 437-8652.

```
;The following routines demonstrate
;the use of VBlank in Action!
```

```
;Call your VBI routine anything,
;but set it up using the same name!
;This example PROCedure is simple
;called "VBlank."
```

```
PROC VBlank()
BYTE Color4=712 ;<--Used for the
                ;   twirling colors
                ;   example.
```

```
[$48] ; PHA   This machine
[$8A] ; TXA   language code
[$48] ; PHA   saves the 6502
[$98] ; TYA   registers.
[$48] ; PHA
```

```
;Place Your VBlank Routine Here!
```

```
Color4==+1 ;<--Used for the
            ;   twirling colors
            ;   example.
```

```
[$68] ; PLA   This code restores
[$A8] ; TAY   the registers.
[$68] ; PLA
[$AA] ; TAX
[$68] ; PLA
```

```
;NOTE: The machine language
;routines for saving and restoring
;the registers must be included
;in your VBI PROCedure.
```

```
;Now exit!
```

```
[$4C $E45F]
;Change $E45F to $E462 for
;Deferred VBI
```

```
RETURN
```

```

;This is the machine language call
;to the Operating System's VBI
;setup routine

```

```
PROC SETVBV=$E45C(BYTE a,x,y)
```

```

;Use the PROCedure SetVBlank to
;initialize your VBI routine.
;It will begin to function
;immediately after calling
;SetVBlank.
;Use the name of your VBI
;PROCedure as the argument.

```

```
PROC SetVBlank(CARD addr)
```

```

SETVBV(6,addr RSH 8,addr&255)
;Change "6" to "7" for Deferred VBI

```

```
RETURN
```

```

;This PROCedure will disengage
;your VBI routine.

```

```
PROC DisengageVBI()
```

```

SetVBlank($E45F)
;Change $E45F to $E462 for
;Deferred VBI

```

```
RETURN
```

```

;This is the Main PROCedure, which
;sets up the twirling colors
;example.

```

```
PROC Main()
```

```
SetVBlank(VBlank)
```

```
RETURN
```

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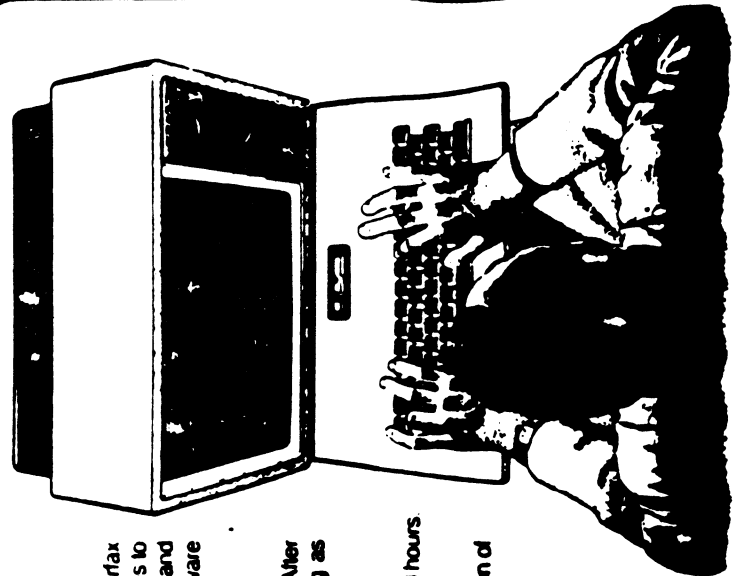
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COMPUTER SOFTWARE PIRACY -- WHY YOU DO CARE

by R. W. Knisely

In a recent article in "InfoWorld", the author stated that the industry estimates that for every copy of a typical, popular computer game that is sold, there will be between six and ten pirated copies in use. In another article in the same magazine, its author stated that Aston-Tate estimates that there are at least three copies of DBase II in use for every one purchased. Many of the major software companies have recently banded together and are making a major push to reduce these ratios through new protection schemes and legal action against the copyright violators. However, the issues surrounding software copyrights are complex and will not be easily resolved. Generally, the emphasis is placed on business software in the corporate environment. While a number of threats have been made, to my knowledge, there has yet to be an individual prosecuted for simple piracy (not involving resale) of software for the home environment. And it is unlikely that any company would take such action, since the legal costs involved would be difficult to recoup through a court imposes damage settlement. However, that does not change two simple facts: software piracy is illegal, and it is hurting the industry as a whole and you as an individual.

Software piracy is extremely pervasive. I know of almost no one who has had their computer for more than a few months who does not possess at least some commercial software for which they have not paid. Some have library of hundreds of programs, yet have never purchased a single software product. The amazing (and disturbing) thing to me is that some of these people see nothing wrong in what they are doing and do not believe they are harming anyone. For the record: if you make a copy of a copyrighted program, except for legitimate backup purposes, you are in violation of the law and could be prosecuted. No matter what else you believe, or what excuse we may use, this simple fact remains.

The reasons why people pirate software are many and varied. Simple greed is probably the most common. "I wanted it, but didn't want to pay the price" -- is one way to put it. A common variation of the theme is: "I wanted it, but it's not worth the 'rip-off' price they charge for it". Hmmm... by that logic, it's ok to steal a car if you don't think the sticker price is fair. The issue of software pricing is an interesting one, but would need more space to discuss than I can give it here. Most people don't have a good idea of the real costs involved, but in any case, this sort of justification for what you're doing does not change the fact that it is illegal. I constantly hear things like, "Well, it's nice to have, but I'd never have bought it, so the company really didn't lose a sale". Perhaps not in your case, and if you never pass it on to anyone else, then no identifiable damage is going to be done, although the act is still technically illegal. Many people get caught up in the collector's syndrome this way, accumulating hundreds of disks filled with software that they never use, but are reluctant to get rid of for fear they just might "need" it someday. Then there are the true pirates, the hackers who see every new protection

scheme as the latest and greatest challenge. Often they will never even run the program after they have "broken" it -- the challenge is gone and their interest moves on to something else. Strangely, they probably pose little threat to the industry, but they enable the rest of us to do so.

Software piracy is a special problem because it is so easy to do and its victim is normally unaware of the act. In an article in the April issue of A.N.A.L.O.G. magazine, Russ Wetmore (author of Preppie and HomePak) recounted a story that bears repeating. "I frequently stop by local software merchants ... to see what people are buying and what kind of difficulties they have in getting software to run... One day, a kid (about 15, I'd guess)... asked me if I'd seen this 'great new game' called Sea Dragon, which he had just gotten a copy of (and which I'd written). 'No, I said enthusiastically, 'what does it look like?' He whipped out a disk (not an original, of course) and booted up the program. I watched passively for a few minutes, then reached in my wallet, pulled out \$3.00 and put it on the table in front of him. Thinking I wanted to buy a copy from him, he said, 'Hey, no problem. Just give me a disk and I'll make a copy for you.' 'No, I don't want to buy it. You see, I wrote the program. I lost about \$3.00 because you stole it. I just wanted to save you the trouble for the next program of mine you steal, and let you take the \$3.00 ahead of time.' He laughed for a bit, then realized I was serious. He turned white as a sheet, silently packed up his box of disks, and left. I've been told that he refuses to take stolen programs now, but one way or another, I made an impression on him... I find it very hard to believe that people would knowingly hurt me (and my family...) by stealing my programs, if they really knew what they were doing." I suspect many of us would find it a lot more difficult to pirate a piece of software if its author were standing behind us and watching over our shoulder as we did it.

Most of us have committed a technically illegal act, some of us feel guilty sometimes -- but so what? Why should I care, what "real" harm will come of it if I don't quit? In my opinion, and that of many others, you should care. First, the war of the protection scheme vs. the pirate will continue. There is a possibility that the producers will devise a nefarious scheme that will defeat even the most determined pirate. Even if not, these increasingly sophisticated schemes will, ironically, cause the most problems for the legitimate users. We already have products that will not run on computers with certain hardware modifications installed, or will not boot on disk drives other than those made by Atari. In addition, protection schemes deprive us of the legitimate right to produce a backup copy, forcing us to buy (at extra cost) a backup or replacement copy from the company (if available at all), else do without the product when it "crashes". Beyond this, the protection schemes are sometimes more complicated than the program they protect and can have significant impacts on development times and costs. I have been told that the Atari version of "One-on-One" by Electronic Arts was ready a full year before it was released, but had to wait until a sufficiently sophisticated protection scheme could be developed. This extra time and effort can't help but contribute to the development costs that

must be recovered by the company. Finally, I genuinely believe that a number of talented, creative programmers have deliberately stayed away from, or left, the home market -- Atari especially, simply because there wasn't enough financial reward possible. Russ Wetmore has said that if HomePak fails financially (its already a tremendous technical success), it will be his last effort for the Atari and, perhaps, for the home market as well. His loss, and others like him, would result in even fewer new, creative products.

So far, I appear to be on the producers' side entirely. Well, as a long-time microcomputer user, my list of complaints about the current state of the microcomputer software industry is pretty lengthy. We are plagued by products that are shabby, poorly documented, marketed at high prices, sold with protection schemes that prevent their legitimate owners from making the backups they are entitled to, given little or no after-the-sale support, and not even warranted to work. Further, the opportunities to try the software before the purchase are almost nonexistent. Unless I trust magazine reviews to judge the quality of the product and believe the manufacturer's claim that this software suits my desires, I have but one easy way to find out for myself if the item is worth buying -- get a pirated copy. Ironically, I feel forced into using pirated software to protect myself, I trust the manufacturers about as much as they trust me, and we both probably have good reason to mistrust each other. How-

ever, if I find the product worthwhile, I will go buy it, after searching around for the best price I can find. The author gets his reward, as small as it may be, and I get the software, complete with backup. If the program turns out to be a dud, or isn't suitable for my purpose, the pirated copy gets formatted and I keep looking.

The bottom line, as I see it, is this: if we fail to support the authors and the companies that do produce good products, then in time, there will be no good products. We may yet see a return to the day that if you wanted a program in order to do something with your computer, you wrote it yourself. Could you write "HomePak", "SynCalc", or "F-15 Strike Eagle"? I doubt I could, and I know that any of them would require such an investment of my time and effort that it would not get done. However, if you or I did expend the time and effort to produce such a product, I think we would feel we well deserved the financial rewards involved.

Piracy will not go away; no amount of logic, persuasion, or even legal action is going to stop it entirely. All I suggest is that you consider the facts and I think you will come to the same conclusion that I have: despite the problems, in the long run, it is not in our best interests to support software piracy. I solicit your support for the products you like and the companies you'd like to see continue supporting us with software for Atari computers.

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Page Designer

Reviewed by John Barnes

Page Designer has been advertised in the last couple of issues of Current Notes. The program was written by Len Dorfman and Dennis Young (who call themselves Pipe Stave Craftsmen on the menu credit). The program is marketed by an outfit named XLent Software that seems willing to undertake almost any off the wall software development project. Mike Barnes, V.P. of XLent, sent me the program after my somewhat critical review of Broderbund Software's Print Shop appeared in Current Notes. Let me say at the outset that Page Designer does not do some things that Print Shop does. It does some other things better. I am glad that I have both programs.

What Page Designer Does

This program allows the user to create page layouts consisting of text superimposed on graphic images. The layout contains the contents of two graphics 8 screens. Everything is completely interactive, what you see on the screen is what comes out on your printer. The example on page 21 of the May Current Notes is good, so is the one in the April issue.

Graphic images from Micro Painter files can be uploaded directly onto the top or bottom half of the page layout. The package provides a utility program to convert Micro Illustrator picture files to Micro Painter files for subsequent uploading. The fonts for writing text are uploaded to replace the Atari character set. The package comes with 15 or so fonts, but the user can also use fonts from most of the font editing programs that are available for the Atari. Fonts can be changed at any time.

Text is placed on the screen in either a 40-column mode or an 80-column mode. The user can switch back and forth between these modes at any time. There is also a graphics mode that allows the user to paint or draw his screen using a joystick. Results can be saved to or recalled from disk at any time.

How the Program Works

After booting the program the user is faced with a menu that allows him to do a page layout on the appropriate printer (Epson or Prowriter) or to perform a picture file conversion. Use the SELECT key to point to the proper menu selection and hit START to run the program.

You may want to convert your picture files first. The conversion utility displays a simple menu that allows you to load your picture file to a graphics 8 screen and then write it back out to disk in the proper format.

Once you have saved the picture files that you are going to use for the background of your page layout, reboot the package and go into the page layout function for the printer that you are using.

The page layout function operates in either text mode or graphics mode. CTRL-G on the keyboard takes you from

text mode (the startup mode) into graphics mode. Pressing the FIRE button on the joystick after pointing to the appropriate menu selection takes you back to text mode.

In text mode striking keys on the keyboard causes the appropriate character to overwrite the image at the cursor position. All of the ASCII characters, some graphics characters, and inverse video characters, are available. Certain of the Control keys serve as function keys in the text mode. These functions determine whether you are looking at the top or the bottom of the page, whether the characters are wide or narrow, and on which scan line the cursor is positioned. Other functions invoked by the control keys allow you to load a font, to look at the disk directory on any of your drives, to load a layout, to save a layout, or to print the layout you are working on. The ESC key lets you go back if you start down the wrong path using one of the CTRL keystrokes. There is no online help, not even a menu, in the text mode.

Once you are in the graphics mode everything, including selecting items from the menu, is done with the joystick. You change colors to erase parts of the image, and you can change the size of the pen point that you are using to paint with. Circles, spheres, and lines are available as graphics primitives.

Once the program is running you can use the SELECT and OPTION keys to control your screen color and luminance.

Why I Like the Program

I like Page Designer because I have a lot of freedom to create. My choices of character sets, text arrangements, and pictorial elements are virtually unbounded. I see what I am creating immediately, I can save it, and I can recall it.

The program allows me to use multiple disk drives effectively, which saves wear and tear on my drive doors.

The software architecture is basically open (see my article on open software architecture in the May Current Notes). I can take fonts that I have designed and use them in nice page layouts. I can take pictures that I have created using my Koala Pad and superimpose text on them. I have access to all of my files if I want to write some clever utility to modify them or use them for something else.

I can use Page Designer for newsletter layouts, teaching aids, and computer assisted drafting, to mention only a few immediate interests.

Quirks

Every piece of software that I have used so far has quirks, and Page Designer is no exception. There are undocumented features that will take a while to find. There are "gotchas" that will take a while to work around. I don't have all of these documented but I have not found any that are overly destructive. When starting out, save

your work frequently, and give yourself plenty of time to get acquainted. I suggest an exploratory approach in which you look closely at how your keystrokes translate into matter on the screen.

I am not too fond of the documentation, which is a bare bones recital of the uses of the function keys on a few typewritten pages. There is no tutorial and there were no examples in the copy that I had.

I am not sure about the range of printer support that is available because I do not know how Panasonics and some of the others relate to the ones that are supported. Check this carefully before you buy.

The program appears to be in a state of evolution. If your copy does not do everything that I have described, check with XLent for an upgrade. Feel free to make suggestions, because the XLent people are very receptive to them.

The Company

Page Designer exposed me to a small, friendly software company. Their packaging is not glossy, nor do they make extravagant claims in the national magazines. Their products (and there are quite a few of them) fill a variety of niches in the Atari world. I wish them good luck

and I know that many Current Notes readers would like to hear more about them and their products.

The Outlook

I have already seen a beta test version of a new program that goes beyond Page Designer in its ability to make page layouts and I think that we will see some enhancements to Page Designer itself, particularly as the new generation of Atari machines comes into wider use. The limitations on storage capacity on 5 1/4 inch diskettes are severe, as is the memory limitation in the 48k machines, so that it is not reasonable to expect too much added functionality. The open software architecture does, however allow for development of additional utilities that might allow for more powerful drafting tools, for example.

Conclusion

Many Atari owners will want to add Page Designer to their software collections. It should prove to a valuable tool for many kinds of work. The \$29.95 price is not excessive. It does not make the kind of spectacular layouts that Print Shop operating in its sign mode does. On the other hand, it does make page layouts that are attractive and that contain much more text than those produced by Print Shop. Many users will want both programs.



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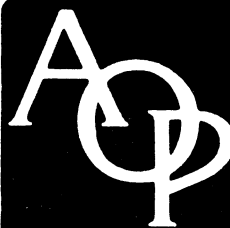
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MULTIPLE DISK LABELS

by Bob Kelly

One of the common problems for home computer owners is keeping track of the numerous individual programs that are stored on a disk(s). This problem tends to grow exponentially over time as the number of disks multiply. One of the easiest steps in alleviating the mental, and sometimes physical, strain associated with organizing files is the development of a program that prints the disk directory on mailing labels which are then easily attached to the disk itself and/or the disk jacket. See the sample label produced below. The short program presented in this article was written initially to satisfy this one basic need. Over time enhancements have been made and few other published programs have as many conveniences.

```

      THE BASIC XL TOOLKIT
* DOS      SYS 032 * AUTORUN SYS 002 * MENU      BXL 014
* SNAILS   BXL 021 * PICOADV BXL 130 * LEM        BXL 073
* 6TIATEST BXL 012 * CIRCLES BXL 019 * DISKIO     BXL 029
* CONFIG   BXL 069 * PHONE   BXL 105 * MAKEAUTOBXL 016
* BASICXL  COM 109 * AUTORUN  BXL 002 * STARTUP   EXC 001
073 FREE SECTORS

```

The Intended User: This program is intended to satisfy needs of two different skill levels. First, it is designed for the new Atari user who is just beginning to accumulate disks. Once in the same position, it took me some time to find a program that would print-out the disk directory to my satisfaction. By that time, I had already accumulated a number of disks and was surprised by the amount of trivia and duplication that had occurred in such a short period of time.

The second group this program is directed towards is the more experienced user. In addition to the many conveniences, described below, this program incorporates two functions not often found. It will center your own individual title for a disk label and most importantly it will provide multiple copies. Since I tend to put labels both on the disk jacket and the disk itself, sometimes I even use the back of the disk, I may require three or four labels which have the same title. The reason for placing a disk directory label on the disk itself is rather obvious. On the other hand placing a label on the jacket prevents the common problem of pulling the disk out of the drive to see how a particular file was spelled or whether the file is even located on that disk.

Using the Program: There are several features built into the program and they, as well as, some programming tips will be explained for reference/tutorial purposes:

1. The program is configured to operate using one and one half (1 1/2) by four inch labels. If using smaller 1-inch mailing labels, first change the entries in the Dimension statement on line 160 and on line 170 (N\$ and MASK\$) from 30 to 25. Also on lines 540 and 550 change X=11 to X=7. In using the program with your particular printer the control codes can be modified to suit individual needs by changing the existing code located on lines 350, 360, 630 and 640. The control codes embedded in the program are applicable to five different printers. They are the Gemini 10X, Epson MX-80FT, Panasonic, NEC, and Prowriter printers.

100 REM DISK LABELS FOR EPSON MX-80FT,
GEMINI 10X, NEC, & PROWRITER: BOB KELLY
- 5/85: VER. 2.2

110 GRAPHICS 18: POSITION 3,1: ? #6; "PRINT MULTIPLE -DISK LABEL-"

120 POSITION 5,4: ? #6; "Epson": POSITION
5,5: ? #6; "GEMINI": POSITION 5,6: ? #6; "
Panasonic"

125 POSITION 5,7: ? #6; "NEC": POSITION 5
,8: ? #6; "Prowriter"

130 POSITION 5,10: ? #6; "Bob Kelly"

140 FOR I=0 TO 15: SETCOLOR 3,I,8: FOR J
=1 TO 125: NEXT J: NEXT I

150 GRAPHICS 0: POKE 559,0: POKE 752,1: 5
ETCOLOR 2,9,0: SETCOLOR 1,0,12: SETCOLOR
4,9,0: TRAP 40000

160 DIM A\$(20), B\$(20), C\$(20), N\$(30), MA
SK\$(30)

170 MASK\$ = " _ ": MASK\$(30) = MASK\$: MASK\$(2)
= MASK\$

180 POSITION 0,6: ? " _____"
" "

190 POSITION 8,8: ? " - Epson/GEMINI/PAN
ASONIC"

200 POSITION 8,10: ? " - NEC/PROWRITER"

210 POSITION 0,12: ? " _____"
" "

220 POSITION 11,20: ? "SELECTION: [] OR
[]: POKE 559,34: OPEN #7,4,0, "K": GET #7
, N: N\$ = CHR\$(N): CLOSE #7: ? CHR\$(125)
230 IF N\$ < "E" AND N\$ < "N" THEN POKE 5
59,0: GOTO 170

240 FLAG = 0: IF N\$ = "N" THEN FLAG = 1

250 IF X = 15 THEN 620

260 TRAP 600: CLOSE #7: OPEN #7,8,0, "P"

270 POKE 559,0: POSITION 0,1: ? "CHECK P
RINTER & INSERT DISK IN DRIVE #1"

280 X = 0: J = 0: C = 5: ROW = 20: L = 30: ESC = 27

290 POSITION 0,6: ? " _____"
" "

300 POSITION 8,7: ? "main menu press []+
[return] "

310 POSITION 11,8: ? "[return] ends progr
am "

320 POSITION 0,9: ? " _____"
" "

330 POSITION 12,16: ? "ENTER DISK TITLE
"

340 POKE 752,1: POKE 559,34: GOSUB 660

350 IF FLAG = 0 THEN ? #7; CHR\$(15); CHR\$(
27); "G"; CHR\$(ESC); "A"; CHR\$(9); : REM PRI
NTER CONTROL CODES GEMINI/EPSON

360 IF FLAG = 1 THEN ? #7; CHR\$(14); CHR\$(
ESC); "Q"; CHR\$(ESC); "B"; : REM PRINTER CO
NTROL CODES PROWRITER/NEC

2. Programs of this nature are usually placed on a general utility disk for easy access. If this is applicable to your situation type "X" plus RETURN and the program will be directed to the main utility menu (line 380). If you do not incorporate this program into a utility menu, the program can be terminated by pressing RETURN as well as eliminating the need for lines 300 and 380.

3. After typing in a disk title, you will be prompted for the number of copies to be printed. If, for any reason, you wish to abort at this point and return to retitling the disk, simply press "0" plus RETURN. Note, the program defaults to one (number of copies to be printed - line 440) when only the RETURN key is pressed.

4. The program uses the trap function extensively, e.g. to signal whether the printer and/or 850 interface is turned on. Once the errant switch is thrown the program will automatically go to the title page (no corrective user action after 15 warning flashes terminates the program - line 250 sets X=15). In addition, if a letter instead of an integer is entered for the number of copies to be printed, the program will default and only one copy will be printed. This prevents an input statement mismatch (error code #8), and the necessity of rebooting the program.

Input Mask Explained: The input mask subroutine is the most interesting portion of the program. The following is a brief explanation of how the mask is set up. Line number 660 clears for new input, positions and displays the mask (see line 280 for values). Line number 670 opens channel #1 and clears the register for the last key pressed (POKE 764,255) for user input through use of the GET statement on line 690. If you wish to delete a character(s) while typing in a disk title, line 700 accomplishes this task and line 760 repositions the cursor. Line 770 prevents the delete function from creating a negative number during the delete process by returning N\$ to null. Line number 720 illustrates program response if the number of characters allowed by the mask is exceeded - THEN 790 - clearing the stack and returning the program to the input position. Once the disk title is correctly entered, line number 730 validates that RETURN was pressed, and returns to line 350. The applications for this input mask subroutine are numerous and I hope it will be of use.

I wish to thank both John Lauer and Bruce Blake from the Atari Users Groups (D.C. & C.P.M.) for their assistance. For those who do not type well and wish to obtain a copy and/or are not interested in working through the programming, this program will be available for downloading from the ARMUDIC BBS starting June 1 under the title DSKLABEL (I may even have a compiled version ready and will upload it to the BBS as well).

```

690 TRAP 790:GET #1,R
700 IF R=126 THEN J1=J1-1:N$=N$(1,LEN(
N$)-1):J=J1:GOTO 760
710 J=LEN(N$):J1=J+1
720 IF J1-1>L THEN 790
730 IF R=155 THEN J1=0:POKE 559,0: CH
R$(125):CLOSE #1:RETURN
740 IF R=32 AND R<95 AND J<L THEN N$
(J+1,J+1)=CHR$(R):? CHR$(R):GOTO 690
750 IF R<126 OR J=0 THEN 690
760 POSITION C+J,ROW: MASK$(1,1):POS
ITION C+J,ROW
770 IF J<1 THEN N$=""
780 GOTO 690
790 POP :? CHR$(125):J1=0:CLOSE #1:GOT
O 260

```

```

370 IF N$="" THEN GOSUB 630:CLOSE #7:
CHR$(125):POKE 559,34:POKE 752,0:END
380 IF N$="X" THEN GOSUB 630:CLOSE #7:
POKE 559,34:RUN "D1:MENU"
390 POSITION 7,1:?"HOW MANY LABELS T
O PRINT?"
400 POSITION 0,7:?"
410 POSITION 7,8:?"previous screen [
+ Return"
420 POSITION 0,10:?"
":POKE 752,1:PO
KE 559,34
430 TRAP 440:POSITION 16,22:?"NUMBER"
:INPUT M:GOTO 450
440 M=1
450 IF M=0 THEN ? #7: CHR$(125):GOTO
260
460 FOR N=1 TO M
470 IF FLAG=0 THEN TRAP 600:X=1: ? #7:C
HR$(14):FOR Z=1 TO (30-J)/2: ? #7:" "
:NEXT Z: ? #7:N$
480 IF FLAG=1 THEN TRAP 600:X=1: ? #7:C
HR$(14):CHR$(127):"G":FOR Z=1 TO (30-
J)/2: ? #7:" " :NEXT Z: ? #7:N$:CHR$(15)
490 CLOSE #2:OPEN #2,6,0,"D1:*.*)"
500 TRAP 540:A$="":B$="":C$=""
510 INPUT #2,A$
520 INPUT #2,B$
530 INPUT #2,C$
540 TRAP 600:IF A$<>"" THEN ? #7:A$;"
":B$;" ":C$:X=X+1:IF X=11 THEN X=0: ?
#7: ? #7
550 IF C$="" AND X THEN FOR Y=X TO 11:
? #7:NEXT Y
560 IF C$="" THEN CLOSE #2: ? CHR$(125)
570 IF C$<>"" THEN 500
580 NEXT M
590 GOTO 260
600 ? CHR$(125):IF PEEK(195)=138 THEN
POSITION 7,12:?"TURN ON PRINTER/INTER
FACE":X=X+1
610 FOR E=1 TO 150:NEXT E: ? CHR$(125):
GOTO 250
620 END
630 IF FLAG=0 THEN ? #7:CHR$(ESC):CHR$(
64):RETURN
640 IF FLAG=1 THEN ? #7:CHR$(ESC):"M";
CHR$(ESC):CHR$(34):CHR$(15):CHR$(ESC):
"A":RETURN
650 REM **** INPUT MASK SUBROUTINE ****
**
660 N$="":POSITION C,ROW: MASK$(1,L)
670 CLOSE #1:OPEN #1,4,0,"K":POKE 764
,255
680 POSITION C,ROW

```


FLIGHT SIMULATOR II

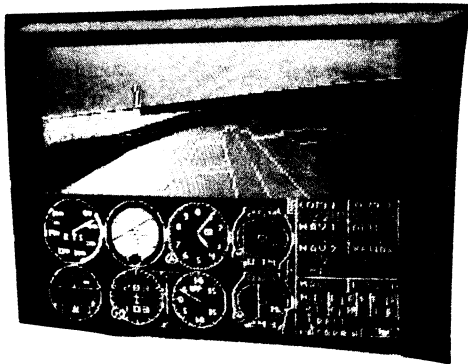
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48K Disk \$39.95

by Curt Sandler

Flight Simulator II is just what the title implies, a program which simulates airplane flight. However, as an added extra it contains an aerial battle game called "World War I Ace". The program comes in a neat slide out box which contains 2 disks, 2 manuals, a flight reference card, 2 reference charts and some other assorted papers. The simulator is fairly complicated, so I'll refer you to the manuals for most of the nitty-gritty.

The program is compatible with the Atari 400 through the 1200XL, however, there are some major differences in the capability if you only have 48K. I compared the capabilities on an 800 and an 800XL. The 800XL really provides all the bells and whistles the program has to offer; the 48k 800 only does the basics, but that's quite a bit.



One disk contains the basic program and the other contains scenery for four different geographical areas, e.g., L.A.. Once the program is loaded the scenery can be changed as desired (more about this later). One manual contains the basic physics of flight, some practice lessons, which go from elementary maneuvers through some instrument flying, and an introduction to aerobatics. The other manual is the operating handbook which tells how to work the program and provides details about the airplane whose flight characteristics (a Piper Archer) are simulated. Joe Waters said that people don't read the manuals that come with software. All I can say is if you don't read these manuals you'll never make it work!

When you boot the program you will see the instrument panel and a view out of the windshield. During the boot you have to answer questions about the kind of display you have and the type of flight, Demo or Realistic; pick Demo at first. The instrument panel is a pretty good representation of that found in a real airplane of this type and it has two radios and a distance measuring equipment read-out (this is used for instrument flying primarily).

Both modes put you on the runway at Meigs field which is on the lakeshore in Chicago. From there you can change your location by going into the Editor and changing the

parameters. This is explained in the operations manual. Also in that manual is a section on a Quick Test Flight which is what you do at this point. This will give you a basic idea of how the simulator works. It takes getting used to but after some practice, things will fall into place. If you know any thing about flying you can use a joystick, otherwise use the keys as they are detailed on the Flight Reference Card. Actually, I've found that a combination of the two works well.

If for some reason you don't like Chicago you can switch to Los Angeles, Seattle or New York. Actually, I should say those areas because with the aid of the area charts you can fly for a few hundred miles. That's what you do with the scenery disk. It provides a representative scene of the area you chose. According to the manual, scenery for other areas is available from subLOGIC.

Speaking of scenery, what is it that you can really see? As I mentioned before, there is the initial view to the front. Also there are views out of the left and right sides and to the rear, one at a time, of course. There is also what is called a Radar view which is in effect a birds eye view with zoom capability. This view is especially useful for taxiing and navigation when you need to determine your location with respect to distant objects such as the airport.

Once you get familiar with the basic operation, I recommend you try the Beginning Flight Lessons. They guide you through the various maneuvers in ascending difficulty and by the time you work your way to Lesson 6, you should be ready to tackle some aerobatics, if you're so inclined. Otherwise, you can do some instrument flying in the rest of the lessons.

In case you've been asking yourself whether the Flight Simulator will help you learn to fly, the answer is YES it will help. There are lots of things you can learn to do such as develop an instrument scan, albeit on a miniature cockpit, however, as with anything else there's no substitute for the real thing and at some point if you really want to learn to fly you will need a real airplane.

Earlier I mentioned some differences between the capabilities on 48K and 64K machines. With 48K you can't fly with the Reality Effects which include such things as starting the engine, and having to set the barometric pressure to get the correct altitude. When you look out the side windows you don't see the wings or the tail through the rear window. Another thing you don't get is a little airplane in the center of the Radar screen which is very helpful for knowing exactly where you are. You can probably accomplish the same sort of thing with a grease pencil mark on your screen but then it won't go away when you go back to the cockpit view. The graphics on a 48K machine are also more spartan. One other odd thing is the color reversal on the attitude indicator or artificial horizon which gives you blue on the bottom half and brown on the top. You can get used to this but --.

Well, what about the game I mentioned before? It's an aerial battle game which lets you bomb the enemy and get into dog-fights with a computer controlled enemy. You

control the hostilities and if you're the sneaky type, you can position yourself over the target and then declare war. Unless you declare war you're just flying a scouting mission and there aren't any enemy planes. The game has about the same limitations on a 48K machine as the Flight Simulator. Nevertheless, you can still get shot down.

Before I close, I'd like to mention two other idiosyncracies of the program. If you have anything plugged into joystick port #2 and the simulator doesn't seem to work right, unplug it and it may correct itself. It does on an 800. Second, occasionally when booting the program or after a crash, a disk error message will appear. The quickest thing to do is reboot. You can follow the instructions but if it doesn't correct itself on the first try, rebooting usually will.

Overall, I think the program is worth the money if you own a 64K machine. If you have a 48K one then it's a tossup depending on your interests. Personally, I prefer it to most of the games that are available (even with only 48K), but then I'm a pilot and that probably makes a difference. In any event, if flying interests you, you'll spend many hours before you master all the things the simulator has to offer.

Happy Flying!!!

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SynFile+ and Computed Dates by Dennis John

SynFile+ is a very powerful program and, as in the case of most such programs, the documentation does not cover every aspect of its use. SynFile allows you to choose from eleven types of data fields, one of which is the date field.

The date field will accept any date from April 1, 1900 to December 31, 1999 in the format mm/dd/yy. While it's nice to be able to include date information in certain types of record files, it would also be nice to be able to use those dates in computations. With a bit of finagling you can do just that.

First, it's important to know how SynFile+ tracks date information. Each date you enter is stored by the program as a number. 01/01/00 is given the value 0. Each day adds one to this value so that 01/01/85 is stored as 30,987 and 01/01/86, or one year later, is stored as 31,352 -- which is 365 numbers higher.

The numbers SynFile+ uses to store date information are not normally shown but by adding a computed field to your database you can retrieve and use those numbers. As an example, let's assume you have a date field which you have named "DATE HIRED". By adding a computed field named "DATE VALUE" with the formula DATE VALUE = DATE HIRED, your DATE VALUE field will always display the numeric value of the DATE HIRED field. You can use this value in all sorts of ways from tenure and raises to anniversaries and retirement. By using the value with other (types of) fields such as conditional, you can have the program print messages based on date calculations such as "RENEWAL DATE".

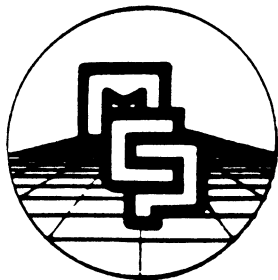
Here's just one example of how a computed date field could be a real work saver. You're running some sort of rental business (books, video, whatever) and tracking your inventory with SynFile+. If your database had date fields "DATE RENTED" and "CURRENT DATE" and computed fields with the numeric values of those dates, you could search for all items that have been out for a certain length of time or compute rental charges for those items. You could use SynFile's UPDATE ALL feature to enter the CURRENT DATE data for all the records in question with only a few keystrokes.

Many uses come to mind for databases of personnel records, memberships, inventory and so on ... be creative!

[Reprinted from the January 1985 edition of the Jersey Atari Computer Group newsletter.]

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SynFile+: Data File Specifications

(c) 1985 Daniel L. Moore

[This description of the SynFile+ data file structure is by the author of SynFile, downloaded from CompuServe and brought to us by Ed Seward.]

There are actually four different files that together make up one SynFile+ datafile. The files can be identified by their extenders, they are .TBL, .CNF, .IDX, and .Dxx. The .TBL file contains a description of the database form. The .CNF file contains the number of records and disks. The .IDX file is the current index data. And the .Dxx files are the actual data files.

THE .TBL FILE

The .TBL file is actually made up of three tables, and two numeric entries. The three tables are the Definitions table, the Name table, and the Special Data table. Each table is headed by a two byte length entry, and then the data bytes. If the table has a zero length, there is only a length entry.

The Definitions Table. The first table, the Definitions table, consists of a sequence of eleven byte field definitions. There is one entry for each field in the database. The format of each entry is shown in table 1.

Table 1: The Definitions Table

Byte #	Use
0	screen column position
1	screen row position
2-3	field name offset and name length
4	field type byte
5	field data length
6	field mask length
7	field special offset (low 8 bits)
8	field data offset (low 8 bits)
9	field data offset (high 3 bits)
	field special offset (high 5 bits)
10	field decimal position

The first two bytes simply give the row and column position of the start of the field name. The screen is 80 columns by 21 lines and 0,0 is the upper left hand corner.

The field name is actually stored in the second data table. The low 11 bits of this 16 bit entry are the offset to the field name in the Name table. The high 5 bits are the field name length.

The low four bits of the field type entry, identify the field type. The high bit of the field type is a flag for the justification of the field, if it is set the field is right justified. There are eleven field types in SynFile+, each has a number associated with it (see table 2).

Table 2: Field Type Codes

ID Number	Field Type
0	ASCII field
1	floating point
2	cumulative computed
3	table look-up
4	dollar
5	record number
6	date
7	integer
8	counter
9	conditional
10	computed

The field data length, is the length of the data stored to the disk record. For ASCII fields it is one greater than the field mask length. For floating point, cumulative, dollar and computed fields it is six bytes. For table look-up and conditional fields it is one byte. All other fields have a data length of two bytes. The field mask length is the length of the mask (underlines) for the field. Record number and date fields have forced mask lengths of five and eight characters respectively.

The special offset is 13 bits split between bytes 7 and 9. Byte 7 has the low eight bits of data, and the high five bits of byte 9 are the high bits of the offset. This is an offset into the Special data table. It is used by computed, cumulative, conditional and table look-up fields. The counter field also uses this entry, but not as a pointer. Counter fields use it as the increment for the field.

The field offset is 11 bits long. The low eight bits are stored in byte 8, and the high three bits are stored in the low three bits of byte 9. This is the offset from the start of the record to the start of the data for this field.

The field decimal position is just that. It tells SynFile how to display floating point numbers. The current version of SynFile only uses the low four bits of this byte. The others are reserved for future use. If the value of this byte is 15 the field will be displayed in floating point, which is however the Atari FP ROM formats the number. For any other value, SynFile will force the display of a decimal point and N digits to the right of the decimal.

The Name Table. The Name table contains all the field names. Each field name is stored as a text entry, with no delimiters or separators between entries. The names MAY not be stored in the same order as the fields entries in the Definitions table (this may occur if the form is edited in the CREATE module of SynFile.)

The Special Data Table. The Special Data table contains all formulas and table look-up field data.

Formulas. Formulas for computed, cumulative, and conditional fields are stored as a sequence of command tokens. The CREATE module parses the user entered formula, and converts it to a tokenized RPN formula. All calcula-

tions are done on a stack. All commands use the top one or two entries from the stack, and leave their result on the top of the stack. All field and numeric references push the data onto the top of the stack. If the high bit of a token is set, then it is a reference to a field. (If the field referenced is an interger (16 bit data) field, a FLOAT will automatically be executed on the field when the data is retrieved.) The command tokens are shown in table 3.

Table 3: Command Tokens for Formulas

Token	Value	Command
0	+	(add the top two values)
1	-	(subtract the top value from second value)
2	*	
3	/	
4	LOG	(take the natural LOG of top number)
5	LOG10	(take the common log of top number)
6	EXP	
7	EXP10	
8	ABS	
9	SQRT	
20	numeric constant	
30	=	(set true flag if top 2 entries are equal)
31	>	
32	<	
33	<>	(not equals)
34	>=	
35	<=	
126	current date	
127	END	(end of formula flag)

Numeric constants (20) are stored as 6 byte internal floating point representations of the number. Entries 30 to 35 are used to compare 2 numbers on the stack for use in conditional operations.

To intrepret a computed field, use the special data offset to set a pointer to the formula. The retrieve tokens one byte a time until the END token is found. The value on the top of the stack at that time is the result of the calculation.

Table Look-up. Table look up entries are stored in packed entries (the length of the entries is equal to the length of the longest entry, not to the mask length.) The field data for a table look-up field is the table entry number. The first byte of a look-up table is the number of entries in the table, the second byte is the length of the entries in the table. Each entry is stored as a text string (with no length byte) and is right justified in the table with underline charcters (ASCII 95) as filler on the left.

Conditionals. Conditional entries are a combination of formula entries and table look-up entries. The special offset for conditional fields points to a two entry look-up table. Immediately after the look-up table data is the formula data for the conditional field.

The last thing in the .TBL file are two numeric entries. Each entry is 16 bits long (two bytes, stored low byte, high byte). The first entry is the field count, the second entry is the total record length in bytes. The record length is one greater than the sum of the field data lengths.

THE .CNF FILE

The .CNF file contains eight entries. Each entry is 16 bits long (two bytes, stored low byte, high byte). The entries are shown in table 4.

Table 4: Contents of CNF file.

- 1 the length of the index array entries
- 2 the total number of records in the datafile
- 3 the number of data disks in the datafile
- 4 the number of active records in the datafile
- 5 the current record number
- 6 the number of index fields
- 7 the current value of the counter field
- 8 the sort direction (ascending/descending flag)

THE .IDX FILE

The length of the .IDX file varies with the total number of records in the file, and the length of the current index. (Both these numbers are in the .CNF file.) The first 32 bytes of the .IDX file are the current index fields. There are 16 two byte entries, the first byte of each entry is the field number, the second is the length of the index data for that index entry. Any unused entries have undefined values, usually 0.

After the field number entries are the index entries for each record. The first entries are for the active records, the entries for inactive records are at the end of the file. Each entry starts with 3 bytes that give the Note/Point data for the record and the disk number for that record. See table 5.

Table 5: The Index File Structure

Byte #	Data
1	Byte offset into data sector
2	Low 8 bits of data sector number
3	High 4 bits of data sector number and 4 bits disk number of record

The disk number is stored in the high 4 bits of the third byte. After the Note/Point data is the index data for that record. All numeric fields are stored in internal format; floating point fields are stored as six byte floating point numbers, integers are stored as two bytes. Table look-up fields are saved as a one byte index into the look-up table. Text fields are saved as a one byte length followed by the string data. There are no separators between index data entries.

THE .Dxx FILE

The .Dxx file(s) contain the actual records. The xx portion of the extender is the disk number of that file. (This is what SynFile uses to identify different data disks.) Each file consists of record entries with no gaps between each record. Each record starts with a record ID byte, which contains the disk number of the record and a flag indicating if the record is active or inactive. If the high bit of the ID byte is set, the record is active. The low four bits are the disk number of that record. After the record ID byte are the field data entries. These entries will usually (but not always) be in the same order as the field definitions in the .TBL file. Each entry is saved in it "internal" format. The formats are shown in table 6.

Table 6: Structure of the Data File

Field Type	Data format
numeric	6 byte floating point number
computed	"
dollar	"
cumulative	"
date	2 byte interger
integer	"
record number	"
counter	"
table look-up	1 byte table entry number
conditional	"
text	1 byte length followed by text

Date fields are stored in Julian format, with a base date of March 1, 1900 (03/01/00).

WARNING! This information is NOT guaranteed to be 100% accurate, and all specifications of SynFile+ may be changed at any time without notice.

MegaFiler Secrets by Mike Barnes

Did you wonder why MegaFiler asks "LOAD AN INDEX FILE?" or "CREATE A SUBFILE?"? These are 2 of the 3 undocumented features available in the newest release of MegaFiler.* MegaFiler's secrets are: 1) DOS functions from the menu, 2) multiple level sorting and 3) subfile creation. Let's go through these one at a time.

DOS Functions: By selecting "D" from the main menu of MegaFiler, you are switched to a second menu that has the familiar functions of disk directory, format, erase, rename, etc. Select "O" from the second menu to return to the main menu.

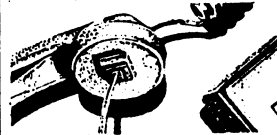
Multi-Level Sorts: MegaFiler handles sorting on more than one field by creating an index file. To create an index file, select "S" for SORT DATABASE from the main menu. There are prompts for the fields to sort and the number of

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positions to sort on. When MegaFiler is through sorting, it will ask for a filename to store the index. Then when you run the report generator, you will be asked if there is an index file to load. Answer "Y" and you will be prompted for the filename from the SORT DATABASE option. Do not sort the key field while in the report generator. Sorting the key field will destroy the multiple level sort information.

Create a Subfile: What this feature lets you do is create another database. This feature is available to you from the Report Generator. If you answer "Y" to the "CREATE A SUBFILE" question, you will be asked for a filename. The new database that you create will only have the records that you have selected for the report.

* If you have an older version of MegaFiler, please contact XLENT Software at P.O. Box 5228, Springfield, VA 22150 for update procedure.

Disabling 800XL BASIC by Dave Webster

This article was written for those people who own diskettes that boot binary files with an AUTORUN.SYS menu loader. I will describe how to boot without holding the option button!

The XL series enables and disables BASIC at address HEX \$D301, DECIMAL 54017. 400/800's usually use this address for the input of joysticks on ports #4 and #4. (Omitted from the 800XL!) The XL series uses this address for a variety of configurations. For example, bit 0 at HEX \$D301 says the operating system ROM is active or you are using RAM below it. Bit 1 says BASIC is enabled or disabled. One of the other bits at this address is used to tell if the diagnostic ROM is enabled or disabled. The normal values for \$D301 are \$FF (BASIC disabled), \$FD (BASIC enabled). All we have to do is add some instructions to the loader program to access RAM and not BASIC. Thus ridding you the bother of holding down the OPTION key to disable BASIC. If you're familiar with machine code you might try adding something like the following: LDA #\$FF, STA \$D301. Since ATARI load files can have multiple segments (each one having its own start and end address) and all files start with two \$FF bytes, you could specify that a file starts at \$D5301 and ends at \$D301, and consists of only one byte \$FF. This would but an \$FF byte at \$D301, enabling RAM and disabling BASIC.

However, there is an easier way to do the same thing. The following steps will tell you how:

For ATARI DOS 2.0S:

1. Boot DOS while holding the OPTION button.
2. Put a diskette, containing the AUTORUN.SYS loader in the drive.
3. Hit the "E" option to rename the loader:
AUTORUN.SYS,AUTORUN.OLD
4. Hit the "K" option to binary save AUTORUN.SYS at a starting address of D301 and ending address of D301. Type it like this:
AUTORUN.SYS,D301,D301
5. Now lastly, hit the "C" option to copy a file. This will be used to append AUTORUN.OLD to the just saved AUTORUN.SYS file. Like this:
AUTORUN.OLD,AUTORUN.SYS/A

For OS/At or DOS XL:

1. Boot DOS while holding the OPTION button. If you see the DOS XL MENU, hit the "Q" option.
2. Put a diskette containing the AUTORUN.SYS loader in the drive.
3. Type this command: RENAME AUTORUN.SYS AUTORUN.OLD
4. Type this command: SAVE AUTORUN.SYS D301 D301
5. Type this command: COPY -AF AUTORUN.OLD AUTORUN.SYS

You now can use this loader with any disk that has binary files on it! It will boot correctly without holding the option button down.

[Reprinted from the Atari Bay Area Computer Users Society, October, 1984.]

Atariwriter Underground: II Phone Lines and Block Moves By Frank Pazel

The Atariwriter ROM has, in addition to the ability to do a form of mail merge discussed in last month's newsletter, the mechanism to transfer files via a modem.

In order to use this hidden modem handler you must boot up a copy of the original DOS 2.0 Master Diskette which came with your disk drive. Most people are unaware that stuck away on its mysterious recesses is the RS232 information for handling modem operations. If you are using OSS software, it is a file called "RS232.COM". Both communicators must be running through an 850 interface Module. Using Option E, rename it to "AUTORUN.SYS" and you are in business. Once both ends of the telephone connection have contacted each other, files are SAVED or LOADED from "R:filename". Try it, and save some transfer time.

The final little trick that Atariwriter will do for you is a variation on its Duplicating Text feature. Rather than using the copy function to copy within a file, you can use it just as well to copy from file to file. Use the Duplicating Text sequence described on page 37 of the instruction manual. This amounts to marking the beginning and ending of the text block you want to move with a CTRL-X. At this point, however, press ESC and return to the menu. Select C to Create a new file or L to Load a file, depending on how you want to use your extracted block of text. If you load a file, enter the Editor, position the cursor where you want to enter the saved block of text and press OPTION D. The saved file has been residing in the copy file buffer and can be used again and again. This is especially handy if you are preparing a report which uses a special format that must be repeated. To repeat copy, just place the cursor where you want to replicate the saved block of text and press OPTION D. No need to remark and save it each time. If you save a new block of text with CTRL-X, that new text will, of course, replace the previously saved block.

The Atariwriter is truly a fine piece of software. Each day I wonder how I could get through my workweek without it. ... Thanks for some of the source material for this article goes to Clyde Pritchard of the Portland Atari Club and an article in the ACE of Syracuse newsletter.

[Reprinted from JACG Newsletter, November, 1984.]



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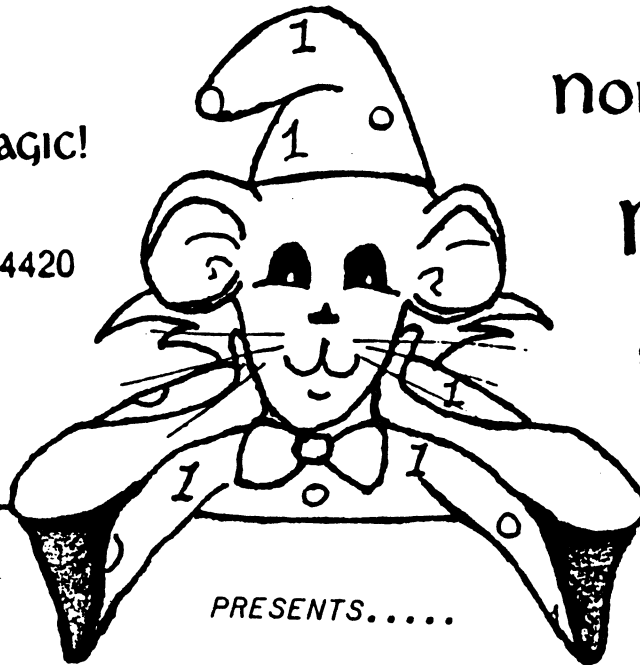
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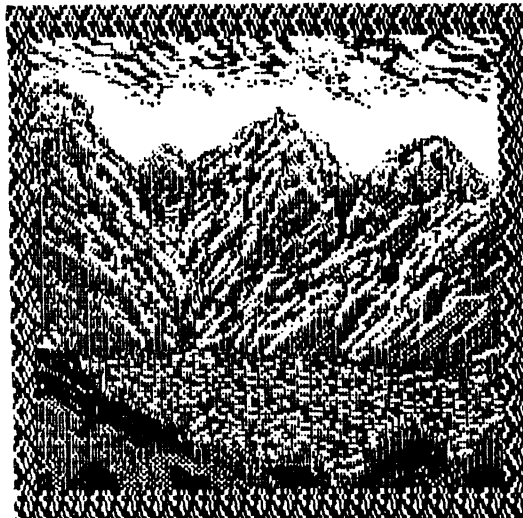
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AURA

Atari Users Regional Association

Minutes: May 1, 1985

by Rochelle Follender

Discussion: The Reference Manual for the club's disk library is now complete and will be available for sale at the next meeting along with disks 41, 42 and perhaps 43. Please note that DDS should be put on library disks. The location of the July meeting is indefinite. Members will receive a postcard or telephone call before the meeting date. Currently, there are 102 members. ATARI has announced it will not be at the June trade show and the ST models are in the distribution pipeline. ACA's BBS should be up shortly, 24 hours a day. The number is: 948-0792. The meeting ended with a question and answer period.

Demonstrations: The subject of the meeting was telecommunications. Neal Jacobs made a video which gave an overview of how modems are actually used. He also shared the number of Goddard's BBS: (301) 344-9156. Marshall began a slide show of the hows and whys a PC communicates with a mainframe. It will be continued at a future meeting. In addition, Bruce showed his menu program and his customized PrintShop DDs. Mo showed two ATARI LAB programs which he rated highly as a way to teach and reinforce the scientific method. Bill demo'd some of the programs on the new library disks.

A.U.R.A. Meeting Schedule Change

Marshall D. Abrams, President

Starting in July, the A.U.R.A. meetings will occur on a different night at a new location. We will meet at the Wheaton Library, 11701 Georgia Avenue, Wheaton, MD. Except for July, we will meet on the first Thursday of the month. Since the first Thursday in July is the 4th, we will meet the following week, July 11th. Please mark your calendars with the new day and location!

CPM

Capital Pro Micro-Users Group

President's Report

by Bob Kelly

April Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for June 25, 1985, at 6:30 p.m. (the fourth Tuesday of the month). At the meeting on May 28, the new Atari computers were discussed as well as having a 130XE in operation with the ATR-8000. Reg Brown demonstrated Microstat - a statistical package for cp/m computers. Microstat was developed for "real-life" applications utilizing fairly large data sets.

Bob Kelly demonstrated Print Shop for the Atari by Broderbund. Print Shop enables you to design and print-out your own customized greeting cards, letterheads, signs, etc.

Bulletin Board System. Frank Huband the SYSOP and Frank Jones, reviewed the procedures for operation of the new Bulletin Board System. Every member should have received special notification in the mail regarding the Board, its operating hours, and passwords. Remember that we are still in the Beta testing stage. However, the telephone cited in the mailing is the permanent number for the CPM / RBBS.

New Features for Co-Power: In case you missed SWP's notice, they have added features to MS-DOS:

1. Built-in ANSI driver. This allows you to use the ANSI screen option when installing some programs.
2. Modifications to allow easier customization of MS-DOS communications programs, complete with instructions.
3. New programs to transfer data/text files between MS-DOS and C/PM. The programs run under MS-DOS and are named CPM2MSDS.COM and MSDS2CPM.COM.

You can get SWP's CO-POWER MS-DOS update by sending the original MS-DOS disk to SWP Technical Support with the standard \$25.00 update fee.

Library Disks. As noted last month library disk prices have been reduced (\$3.00/disk). Prices for non-members remain the same at \$5.00/disk. Next month this column will carry a complete listing of all library disks as well as instructions on how to order.

NCAUG

National Capital Atari Users' Group

Secretary's Report

by Peter Kilcullen

News and Events: For the April meeting, the new 130XE was demonstrated. It's the most compact Atari computer made to date. Prices vary widely from \$139 - \$199, mail order discount.

Locally, the advertisers in Current Notes are receiving shipments almost weekly. Rumor says that 40,000 units have been sold to date.

With the price of 800XL's down to \$89, there may not be a market for the announced but not yet available 65XE. Dos 2.5 for use on the 130XE is available for download from Armudic BBS.

For the May meeting, Frank Huband will demonstrate some new graphics programs: Printshop, and two new graphics programs from XLEnt software. Also the newest and best tank battle wargame, KAMPFGRUPPE by SSI will be demon-

strated. (see review in BATTLE BYTES elsewhere in this issue).

Personnel: Art Corte, our Program Chairman will be moving out of the area and a new chairperson is needed. Also the club will have its annual elections for officers at the June meeting on Tuesday, June 18. Members are urged to be present and to volunteer for offices.

Library: The library had a disk for MPP modem owners which contains many programs for the MPP modem. However, Compuserve has just released MSCOPE for MPP modem owners which replaces for use on Compuserve some of the cumbersome translation files on the club disk.

MSCOPE is available for downloading from Armudic BBS. Also Analog issues 8-31 are available. Many recent Compute! and Antic programs will be available soon.

NOVATARI

Northern Virginia Atari Users Group

President's Report

by Joe Waters

May Meeting. We met for the first time in the large auditorium at Washington Gas Light. Most attendees were favorably impressed with our new facilities. Parking space will no longer be a problem, accoustics were excellent, the seats were comfortable and, since there are only seven rows, even those in the back of the auditorium had a reasonable view of the proceedings. We demonstrated DOS 2.5 and the new ramdisk, a variety of graphic masterpieces, a preview of Music Disk No. 3, the just released ACTION game disk, the NPX Vizpics and Word Builder programs, SPY vs SPY, and ENCOUNTER. As door prizes we gave away ENCOUNTER, BLUE MAX, and three library disks. Ed Seward presented the telecommunications program. Ed had videotaped sessions on ARMUDIC, the HOTLINE, COMPUSERVE, and GAMES COMPUTER PLAY. His tape also showed the use of AMODEM as well as TSCOPE, DISKLINK, and HOMETERM.

Meeting Format. With one meeting now under our belt, we decided on the following schedule for future meetings. The informal gathering will start at 5:30. From 5:30 to 7:00 new, and old, programs will be demonstrated at the front of the auditorium; in the right-hand corner, the disk library and new blank disks will be available; in the left-hand corner will be a "Kids" area where younger members can show-off their skills at various Atari games (you may play any games you want, but no copying of any sort will be allowed). At 7:00 we will start a brief 15-minute business meeting, followed by the door prize drawing, and then a brief 10-minute break. At 7:30 all background activity -- library and disk sales, game playing, etc -- will close down and the formal program will begin and will go to approximately 8:30. To prevent our meetings running too late, we will make every attempt to adhere to this schedule.

Coming Events. [Note that the position of Program Chairman is still vacant.] Our formal programs for the summer are going to center on the Atari and Printers. In June, we will look at PRINTERS including the pros and cons of dot-matrix versus letter quality as well as recommendations on various brands. In July, we will focus on programs that allow you to take full advantage of the capabilities of dot matrix printers (such as MEGAFONT II+, PRINT SHOP, PAGE DESIGNER, PRINT WIZ, etc). In August, we will begin thinking ahead to the school year and take a look at the various WORD PROCESSORS available on the Atari. [I really would like to have a Program Chairman.]

New product demos at each meeting will be somewhat ad hoc. As soon as we get an ST, it will be shown at the next meeting. Similarly for other Atari peripherals such as the new printers, the modem, and any new software introduced. If you have a new program you would like to share, just give me a call and we will include it in the demos. [See, being program chairman really isn't that difficult.]

Logistics. The club now has a Commodore monitor to go along with the Atari 130XE. In the semi-circular arrangement of the auditorium, if we could get some volunteers to bring in some TVs, we could place a TV in front of each section of the auditorium. That way everyone would have a better view of what is being demonstrated. [If you can't be program chairman, maybe you could volunteer to bring in a TV?] We could also use some carpenters who might be able to construct a light but durable box-type structure that we could place the TV/monitors on to raise them high enough for everyone to see. Volunteers, give me a call. [If we had a program chairman, you could call him/her.]

Help! Something not working the way you expect? The manual little or no help? Just spent two hours trying to get that @###@ thing to work and gotten nowhere? The solution to your problem may very well be quite easy. The problem is you don't know the solution. Who do you call? Ghostbusters! Sorry, couldn't resist that. Actually, you call Georgia Weatherhead (938-4829). Georgia probably won't have the answer but Georgia does have a list. A list of members who have indicated that they have or are experienced in using various software programs or hardware setups. Hopefully, she can direct you to somebody who can give you help. Georgia would also like the names of some more volunteers. Are you willing to give novices a hand? Would you like to serve as a central coordinator, for example, someone who could talk about a topic, say printers, in general and then, if need be, refer an individual to specific members who have experience in the hardware or software in question? Georgia will gladly add your name to our list, give her a call.

Seminars. We have found a place to teach our seminars -- Nottoway Park Community Center in Vienna (between 123, 243, and 66) more or less right in the center of NOVATARI territory. Seminars will be scheduled to run from 7 to 9 in one or two-day classes. There will be at least three seminars each month. Seminars are open to the public and cost \$5/hour. Any member of NOVATARI or any of the other clubs in WAACE may attend seminars for half price. Thus a

one-day seminar costs \$5 and a two-day seminar \$10. We need at least 8 participants for a course. More will be accommodated but there is a limit on how many participants we can effectively teach and still provide "hands-on" experience. Preregistration, therefore, is encouraged to assure your seat. Call Donna Yarbrough (703-255-3967). If demand warrants, we can always schedule another session if any particular course gets filled up early. If you think you would like to teach one of the courses offered or have ideas for another, give Donna a call. The schedule for June and July is listed below:

June 10: Introduction to the Atari. For new and potential Atari owners. An overview of the Atari computer and related peripherals from opening the box to getting started with BASIC.

June 12: Disk Drives and Disk Operating Systems. How to use a disk drive with your computer. What is ATARI DOS and how to use it to maintain files in your system.

June 17,19: Word Processing on the Atari. How to use your Atari as a word processor to write (and print) letters, memos, term papers, etc. Course features AtariWriter.

June 24,26: An Introduction to Atari Basic. This seminar won't make you an accomplished BASIC programmer, but it will help you get started. Participants will develop simple numerical and text programs and see how to use BASIC to manipulate sound and graphics on your Atari.

July 15,17: Spreadsheets on the Atari. Learn how you can develop and use a spreadsheet, the most popular of microcomputer programs. Course features SynCalc.

July 22,24: Introduction to Databases. Learn how to design and create your own database, input and retrieve information and prepare simple reports. Course features SynFile.

LOGO Graphics for Preschoolers. This course is designed specifically for preschoolers with parents attending. Features limited enrollment, offline games with puppets to learn elementary commands, online practice with simple commands and procedures. Parents will learn games and how to play them at home with their children. Date and time to be arranged. Call Georgia Weatherhead (703-938-4829) for more info and for registration.

Novatari Library. Four new disks were introduced in May. Utility Disk No. 3 is Atari DOS 2.5. Our 3rd telecommunications disk, courtesy of Peter Kilcullen of NCAUG, is for owners of the MPP modem. It includes versions of AMODEM with an autodial program, as well as MSCOPE, for use on CompuServe. Game Disk No. 7, Action Games includes 9 fantastic games written in the Action! language. You do not need the Action language to run these games. Language Disk No. 2, Action Source programs includes the source code for 6 of the games on the Action game disk. You will need the Action cartridge to use these programs. Hopefully the code will help you in developing your own Action programs.

Coming Up Soon: Music Disk No. 3 JAZZ, which will include a driver program for playing AMS II Music files, and Music Disk No. 4 BASIC Music Programs. Game Disk No. 8 will feature Arcade Look-a-Likes and Utility Disk No. 4 will be a complete Relational Database Management System.

BASIC XL SIG. The June meeting will be held from 6:00 to 6:30 at the Novatari meeting on June 9. Hopefully, the small auditorium will be available for this meeting. Anyone interested in learning more about BASIC XL, the enhanced version of BASIC available from OSS, feel free to stop in at the SIG meeting.

TELECOM SIG. Interested in forming a telecommunications Special Interest Group? An exploratory meeting will be held at the next Novatari meeting from 6:30 to 7:00 also, hopefully, in the small auditorium. This group is for anyone who is interested in accessing and using bulletin boards or information services such as CompuServe or Plato. Since it costs money to download programs from services such as CompuServe, perhaps a little coordination of the downloading activity can make more programs available to more people at a minimum cost for all. If you are interested in chairing this special interest group, give me a call or leave a message up on ARMUDIC.

Current Notes. If for some reason you have not received your issue of Current Notes and you think you should have, be sure to check with Earl Lilley at the meetings to verify that we have your correct mailing address. Earl has back issues which can be made available. Also, if you are moving, be sure to get your new address into Earl.

=====

WORD PUZZLE

By Jay Gerber

```

S T A R R A I D E R S E A B S
R P C E C T I A D E F U G O I
E O H V I I J K L M B I T N X
T K O B Q P T R S T I R U V T
I E W X Y Z Y N X R T D W A Y
R Y T S C B M A A T S K M E F
W X D G O J E T Y B K S E F I
I I R A Z U A W B C G I G H V
R S E A G I N J A Y G D E G E
A E N R T D B D E R R O O S O
T G R G R A P H I C S V E M T
A A A A A R L I E D A E L C W
A P W R M E O N D N A V I X O
S T M A R Y T R A M I E L P E
O L I Z A R O T I N O M B A T

```

There are at least 25 words relating to the Atari computer that are hidden in the above puzzle. They can read across, up-and-down, and in any direction diagonally. Careful, some of them may be backwards. Good Luck! (Answer next month).

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- 6-GRAPHICS GAMES (Engineer, Night Flyer, Oil Piazza Hotel, Retrofire, Titan)
- 7-ACTION! GAMES (Rats Revenge, Warp Attack, Birds, Angle Worms, Gems, Snails, Pong, Break Out, Bounce Fun)
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- 3-JAZZ (AMS II: Coming)
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- 3-MPP Modems (Amodem Plus V1.6, AmodemXL, MPP File converters, R-Handler, MSCOPE, and documentation)
- 4-Chameleon Terminal Emulator (Coming)

UTILITY DISKS:

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- 1-fg-FORTH Version 1.1 (Includes FORTH language, Assembler, Debugger, Editor, and complete doc files)
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Meetings: 1st Wednesday of every month, 7:00 pm, Room One, Long Branch Public Library, Garland Avenue, East Silver Spring, MD. Take the Beltway (I-495) to Exit 29-B, South University Blvd. East, (Route 193). Follow University Blvd. East to 2nd light (Piney Branch Road), turn right on Piney Branch Road, continue to 2nd light (Arless Street), turn right on Arless past the apartments to Garland Avenue, turn right on Garland. The Long Branch Library is on the corner. Park in the library's lot.

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on the Blue and Orange lines. Take the 18th Street exit, and walk south (against the flow of traffic) down 18th Street for three blocks to G street. The building, on the corner of 18th and G, can be identified by a sign for the Madison National Bank on the corner. Parking is available in the building for a fee. The front entrance is on the west side of 18th street, between F and G.

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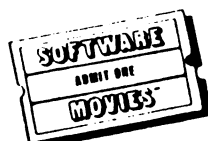
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